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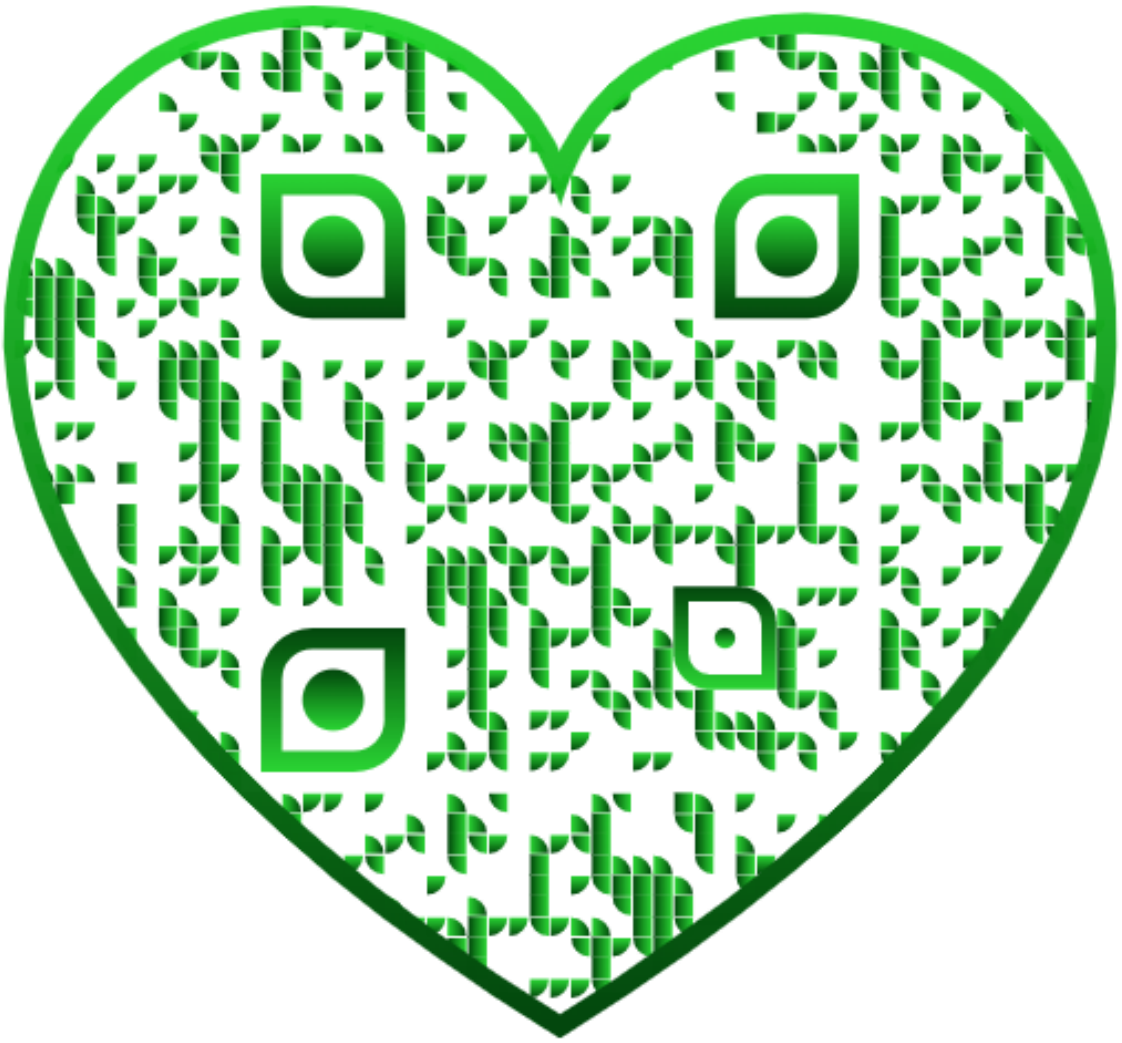

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BETWEEN STREAMING, festivals, commercial placements and classic old-school terrestrial radio, there's a lot of talk about how people discover new music these days. But, as the era of "tastemaking" has taken hold in the ever-eclectic modern age, another, less tangible methodology has emerged: group consciousness. Every so often, an artist comes along with just the right sound, story and scene, and his or her trajectory almost seems predetermined from the start—or at least for a specific moment in time.

That was certainly the case when I first saw Courtney Barnett play at The Knitting Factory, a tiny Brooklyn venue, during a quick swing through New York in February 2014 that also included a stop at the Mercury Lounge and a brunch-time media event at Pete's Candy Store. She'd played New York before—her appearances at Pianos, Glasslands and Mercury Lounge the previous fall generated a decent amount of buzz. But there was something about that cold, winter weekend that felt like her inauguration. Her stylistic turns were the perfect soundtrack for the times—a seamless blend of Cobain-approved guitar rock, comedic wit and festival-ready swagger that seemed to foreshadow the darker political clouds that would start hovering over the media in the next 18 months. And, even on a club stage in front of a few hundred people, you could already envision "Avant Gardner" racking up streaming plays, blasting out of the speakers at Bonnaroo and Newport Folk, scoring television commercials and even working its way up and down a car radio dial.

At the time, Barnett had recently packaged her two Australian EPs as an unofficial U.S. debut on Mom + Pop and, by the time she actually dropped her first full length LP the next year, she felt like an old hometown favorite, who happened to be born on the other side of the world. In a few years, she managed to make all those aforementioned crossover inroads, also finding time to appear on a number of late-night TV shows, make an album with Kurt Vile just for fun and, along with fellow Aussies like Tame Impala and King Gizzard & the Lizard Wizard, remind the world that not all pop music originates in the Northern Hemisphere.

It wasn't only that the *right* people were at those early gigs either, though you could certainly see lightbulbs going off left and right. It's that something about Barnett's music is so open, and so intimate, that you feel like you're taking part in her stories as they unfold, whether that's the situational black comedies that color *The Double EP: A Sea of Split Peas* or the deep, insightful diary entries that define her new release, *Tell Me How You Really Feel*.

On The Verge-era Courtney, circa 2014

I'm definitely prone to early onset nostalgia, but I knew that when I told my friend that one day Courtney Barnett would rise from our On The Verge section to the cover of *Relix* that night at the Knit, I wasn't giving into my more emo tendencies. She just felt like one of us, even if she came from somewhere entirely different.

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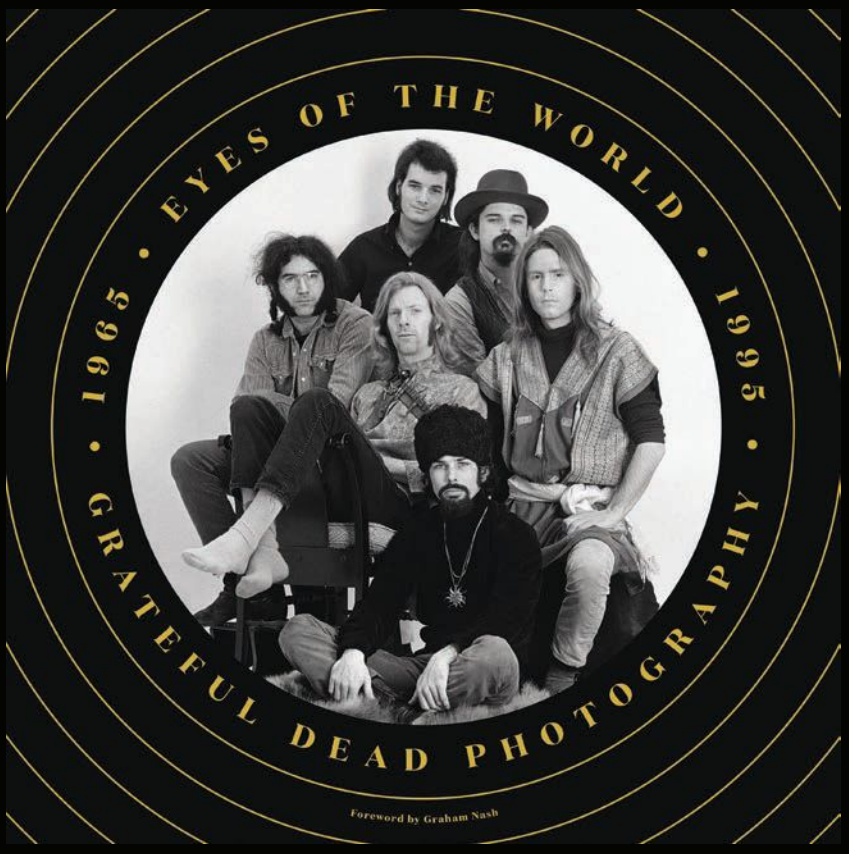
ON THE COVER

Courtney Barnett was shot by Tajette O'Halloran.



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"A startling reminder of how good things can get with a touch of grace, some laughter and a lot of good luck. You can almost hear the joy in these images that only music can bring." **— MICKEY HART**

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On Relix.com:

Umphrey's McGee drops a surprise full-length album, **Dave Matthews Band**'s new keyboardist gets funky, **Todd Snider** jams with another Hard Working American at Terrapin Crossroads, the *Bonnaroo Beacon* returns for the 17th year and **John Mayer** may be trolling all of us with his "New Light" music video.

On Jambands.com:

Trampled by Turtles return to the road, **Brendan Bayliss** and **Joel Cummins** offer an in-depth look at their latest batch of songs, **Percy Hill** celebrates 20 Years of *Color in Bloom*, **Frank Melfi** showcases his visions of Led Zeppelin, and **Alan Paul** reports from the trenches at **Dickey Betts**' long-awaited comeback show and reunion with **Jaimoe**.

FEATURES

56 | You Must Be Having So Much Fun. Everything's Amazing.

BY MIKE GREENHAUS

Courtney Barnett first made her mark by matching Pavement-approved, slacker-rock jams with a set of observational stories that fell somewhere between alt-psych rock and *Seinfeld*-like humor. But on her sophomore LP, *Tell Me How You Really Feel*, the wry Australian guitarist has shifted her attention inward, offering a deep meditation on confusion and communication in the modern age that also happens to be one of the catchiest indie-rock albums of the year.

53 | Friends From Home

BY JUSTIN JACOBS

When **Dawes** cut their debut *North Hills* in 2009, they were young men updating the folksy Americana sound of their idols but, somewhere along the way, their narrative started to feel a bit fuzzy. Now, **Taylor Goldsmith** and his LA combo have returned to their roots, recruiting their original producer Jonathan Wilson for a warm, worn-in set of atmospheric songs that may be their most mature collection yet.

51 | A Life to Fix Anew

BY LARSON SUTTON

The Record Company is the rare classic-rock band in an age of hip-hop and pop, functioning as a democratic unit and working their way up the venue rungs, club by club. And, after nurturing their dedicated fanbase grassroots style, the California-bred trio offers a peek behind the glass with their second studio release, *All of This Life*.

48 | Not Fade Away

BY RAFFAELA KENNY-CINCOTTA

The era of the Grateful Dead is far from over and perhaps no tribute band has been truckin' along at such a high level as **Dark Star Orchestra**. Having now performed more concerts than the Dead themselves, this veteran ensemble continues to carve out their own lane not only by recreating classic setlists, but also by channeling a deep, improvisational connection that dates back well past New York's Wetlands Preserve.

44 | I am the Cosmos

BY RYAN REED

Let's get heady: **Lord Huron** may have emerged from the folky revival that meshed with indie-rock a decade ago, but **Ben Schneider** always had loftier aspirations. So it isn't surprising that Lord Huron's latest release, *Vide Noir*, is a headphone-friendly, space-age journey that stills captures a very authentic sense of American beauty.

41 | Conquering The Mullet

BY MIKE AYERS

Since the members of **Leftover Salmon** started throwing pickin' parties nearly 30 years ago, they have been at the forefront of the bluegrass-jamband fusion affectionately dubbed jamgrass. Though they've faced some setbacks along the way, **Vince Herman**, **Drew Emmitt** and their merry men are still out there pushing their boundaries night after night and, on their new release *Something Higher*, they still sound as strong as ever.

40 | Looks Like Rain

BY JOHN PERRY BARLOW WITH ROBERT GREENFIELD

John Perry Barlow's February passing left the music and tech communities reeling from the loss of a legendary lyricist and digital pioneer. We are thankful that the Grateful Dead collaborator was able to finish his new autobiography *Mother American Night: My Life in Crazy Times* before his passing and are proud to offer an exclusive excerpt that focuses on a memorable songwriting session with his lifelong friend **Bob Weir**.

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DEAR RELIX

Here's what readers are talking about online and offline

Branford Marsalis with the Dead

DEAR RELIX

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Send your thoughts to letters@relix.com.

LOCKN'

In May, the Lockn' festival revealed two special collaborative sets: Branford Marsalis will sit in with Dead & Company and drummer Jason Bonham will join Umphrey's McGee. Marsalis has a long, involved history with the members of the Dead, dating back to his first performance with the group in 1990. Phil Lesh initially invited the saxophonist to sit in for "Bird Song," but their chemistry turned out to be so inspired that the noted jazz improviser ended up returning for most of the group's second set and encore. And Marsalis has maintained his ties to the Dead world ever since.

Though Lockn' will mark Bonham's first performance with Umphrey's McGee, the group has covered Led Zeppelin since their formation in the late-'90s. As of press time, the group already has an arsenal of around 20 Zep covers to chose from, ranging from classics like "Kashmir," "The Song Remains the Same" and "Whole Lotta Love" to mash-ups, medleys and a myriad of key album cuts. Umphrey's McGee guitarist Brendan Bayliss also memorably sat in with Bustle in Your Hedgerow, an instrumental Led Zeppelin cover band comprised of future members of Joe Russo's Almost Dead.

Below, Relix *readers react to the lineup additions:*

I feel an "Eyes of the World" in the air.
Keith Shaw via Facebook

Oh, shizzle. UM gonna drop some serious Zeppelin bombs that night—damn! *Kristi Wood via Facebook*

Lockn' just got even sweeter with Branford!!! Thx Shapiro!
Michelle N Rick Paterniti via Facebook

Should be an EPIC Dead & Co. Show.
Joe via Jambands.com

GEORGE CLINTON WILL RETIRE FROM P-FUNK IN 2019

Recently, funk legend George Clinton announced that he will permanently step away from Parliament Funkadelic in May 2019. "This has been coming a long time," Clinton said in an official statement. "Anyone who has been to the shows over the past couple of years has noticed that I've been out front less and less." Parliament Funkadelic will continue to tour following the 76 year old's departure but, in the meantime, the singer has a full slate of dates set, and there are plans underway for his final "One Nation Under a Groove" tour, described in a press release as a "once-in-a-lifetime send-off."

George Clinton

Following the announcement of Clinton's departure, our readers shared their feelings about the Godfather of Funk:

Say it ain't so? Well-deserved. Thanks for your funk. *Chip Marshall via Facebook*

Seen him twice—guy was always on his game! *Will Peck via Facebook*

But, we want the funk!
Michael D'Angelo via Facebook

See him while you can.
Rickie Woodring via Facebook

FANS.COM PHOTO CONTEST

The Marcus King Band performing at Asheville, N.C.'s US Cellular Center on Feb. 16, 2018. Photo by Sean Chagnon. Want to be published in *Relix*? Just upload an original photo from a live music event to *Relix*'s Fans.com Photo Contest app. Noted photographer Jay Blakesberg will select the winner from the group of 10 finalists that receives the most votes.

Kraig Fox (Marsalis), Dino Perrucci (Clinton)

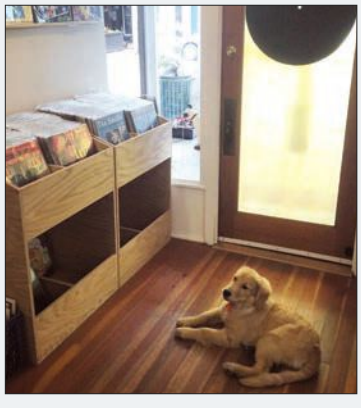
INSTAPRINT

Judging by his Instagram, Kurt Vile (@kurtvile) was clearly over the moon to meet the legendary John Prine at Philadelphia's Merriam Theater. "Proud to be standing here backstage next to the father of songwriting #johnprine as well as my real dad Charlie Vile on the other side," Vile wrote. The singer/guitarist opened for Prine at the venue in April, and even joined him onstage for versions of "Speed of the Sound of Loneliness" and "Sam Stone." Prine invited Vile out once more for the encore of "Paradise," dedicating the tune to Vile's father, who was in the audience. "Feeling loved and high as horse balls," Vile added.

RECORD STORE PROFILE:

ROCKET NUMBER NINE RECORDS KINGSTON, N.Y.

Doug Wygal, the owner of Kingston, N.Y.'s Rocket Number Nine Records, is constantly looking for rare LPs to add to the store's lauded jazz section—and his stock moves pretty fast. Yet, despite its admiration for improvisational pioneers (a photo of Albert Ayler hangs on the wall and illustrations of Thelonious Monk and Billie Holiday are emblazoned on their T-shirts), the store also boasts a nice enough mix of classic rock, folk, blues and R&B to satisfy any musical palate. Rocket Number Nine regularly opens its doors for in-store performances, too, entertaining patrons with esteemed acts on the local and national scale. Rocket Number Nine is a "proud pet friendly establishment" and its lively atmosphere is even more festive over the weekend, thanks to a nearby farmers' market.



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Building Businesses In The Music Space: Peter Shapiro, Dan Parise, Ami Spishock, Danny Clinch (l-r)

RELIX LIVE MUSIC CONFERENCE

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BROOKLYN, N.Y.

MAY 8–9

BY RAFFAELA KENNY-CINCOTTA // PHOTOGRAPHY BY TAYLOR HILL

"There's a lot to be said for approaching music with integrity," **Don Was**, the rare triple threat of musician, producer and label executive, told the sold-out crowd at the **Relix Live Music Conference**. "*That's* a good business model."

Expanding to two full days of panels and discussions, the second annual RLMC dug in even deeper into a unifying theme that almost all of the event's panelists touched on: It's all about relationships. *Relix* Associate Publisher and Senior Vice President of Dayglo Ventures **Rachel Baron** echoed that sentiment in her opening remarks, encouraging attendees and speakers alike to "get comfortable, be interactive... meet new people and strike up a conversation." And, almost immediately, the RLMC fostered great conversations between music industry professionals of all stripes. From the merging of technology and music through live streaming, to the rapidly expanding world of festivals, the event's daily panels were eye-opening and enlightening for everyone in attendance.

"I was surprised at how I found the conversations [to be] educational and interesting," *Relix* publisher and Capitol Theatre proprietor **Peter Shapiro** said afterward. "I've done a show every night for 20 years, and I still found myself sitting there and listening. At times, I didn't want the panels to end."

Shapiro appeared in a number of talks, including "Restoring a Rock Palace—Bringing Back The Cap," which analyzed the resurgence of Port Chester, N.Y.'s Capitol Theatre. Moderated by WFUV's **Rita Houston**, the panel was a free-form discussion featuring Shapiro, **Marc Allan** (Jerry Garcia Family), **Tom Bailey** (The Capitol Theatre), **Anthony Makes** (Live Nation) and **Stefanie May** (The Capitol Theatre). At one point during the conversation, Shapiro recounted the early days of The Cap, explaining how the venue's rounded ceilings inspired its now-famous lighting design. "From the beginning, I saw the opportunity to combine visual projections and make a music venue a planetarium," he recalled.

Shifting away from some of the conference's broader industry panels, this year's event also included some more focused talks. **Nick Harvey** (Atlantic Records), **Matt Hickey** (High Road Touring) and Portugal. The Man manager **Rich Holtzman** all dissected the strategies that led to the unexpected crossover success of the band's latest LP, *Woodstock*. "Universally, every promoter loves [Portugal. The Man] and wants them to succeed," Hickey pointed out, proving that, oftentimes, professionalism and kindness go a long way.

The idea of personal agency in the face of a daunting profession carried over into the following panel on entrepreneurship. Moderator and *Relix* Editor-in-Chief **Dean Budnick** noted his history as co-creator of the Jammy Awards with panelist Shapiro, where both worked with fellow panelists photographer **Danny Clinch** and CEO and President of Diversified Production Services **Dan Parise**, who weighed in with their own perspectives. Looking back on his storied career, Clinch urged attendees to remain active and responsive given an ever-changing environment: "It's not about if it's easier or if it's harder. It's about if you have the hustle," he asserted. **Ami Spishock** (co-founder of Fort William Artist Management and manager for The War on Drugs and Grizzly Bear, among others) also revved up the crowd by asking, "Are there ladies in the audience?" and lobbied for more balanced gender representation within the music world.

As the audience filed in for the day's final offering, journalist **David Fricke** engaged in a spirited Q & A with Was, who arrived at the Bowl fresh from a New Orleans *Exile on Main St*. tribute show honoring his collaborators The Rolling Stones. "My style of production is to work with artists who I have tremendous respect for. And the fun of it is helping them hear what's playing in their head and helping them realize it," Was said.

Later, he answered an audience question about producing Gregg Allman's final record, *Southern Blood*. "It's tough for me to play that album. [I become] emotionally overwrought," he explained. "What I can tell you is Gregg was the living embodiment of everything that should be a rock-and-roll star—he was the shit, man. He was the real deal. But he was also one of the sweetest guys I've ever met."

Superfly—Bonnaroo and Beyond: Jonathan Mayers, Rick Farman, Kerry Black (l-r)

Jay Curley, Global Head of Integrated Marketing, Ben & Jerry's

Sponsorship—Fostering Cultural Connections: Joe Killian, Liz Norris, Molly Bailin, Jessica Beutler Abel, Andrew Klein (l-r)

Management—Move Me Brightly: Dave Frey, Andy Mendelsohn, Rich Schaefer, Nadia Prescher, Dan Berkowitz, Matt Busch (l-r)

David Fricke and Don Was (l-r)

Where day one mostly focused on the importance of networking, much of day two revolved around the topic of innovation. "We're always looking to what's next: the next trend, what's going to make things easier," said **Liz Norris** of ACTIVIST Artist Management during "Sponsorships—Fostering Cultural Connections."

Jay Curley (Ben & Jerry's), **Brodie O'Brien** (Ben & Jerry's), **Beth Montouri Rowles** (Phish Inc./Waterwheel Foundation) and **Andy Bernstein** (HeadCount) also took the stage to discuss how their companies are constantly bridging the divide between live music and social work, and forging new avenues for activism. Bernstein, who founded HeadCount with the Disco Biscuits' Marc Brownstein, utilized his moment in the spotlight to announce a partnership between the nonprofit and Celestial Seasonings that will offer free Phish-themed and Grateful Dead-themed tea blends at shows this summer.

The RLMC closed, fittingly, with a case study on Superfly, the groundbreaking and ever-growing production company behind Bonnaroo, Outside Lands and a number of other premier events. Hailed as innovators in their field, co-founders **Kerry Black**, **Rick Farman** and **Jonathan Mayers** chatted with *Relix* Editor-in-Chief **Mike Greenhaus** about their origins in the New Orleans music scene and their current strategy of booking classic, iconic and of-the-moment acts to create once-in-a-lifetime experiences. "We're all [working] in live entertainment," Farman said to the rapt audience. "There's a lot of potential to apply that skill set beyond music—people are looking for real-world, meaningful experiences.

YONATAN GAT

The cosmically exiled, Israeli-born former Monotonix guitarist offers a worldly blend of outsider sounds on his latest solo journey.

By **JUSTIN JACOBS**

For Israeli guitarist Yonatan Gat, music is all about connection—and not just with whoever is in the room. The man strives to reach through time and space, and his latest album, the sprawling, psych-jazz burst *Universalists*, is the closest he's come to making contact.

Gat was born outside of Tel Aviv, Israel, and by the time he turned 18, he was exploring the depths of the city's music scene and coming up empty for inspiration. He set up shop with similarly disenchanted friends at a dive bar called Patiphone that shared its entrance with a brothel; by 2005, Monotonix was born. The band's jarring punk sound sent shockwaves through the Israeli rock scene—their shows were chaotic, explosive and unrelenting, and tapped into a truth of Israeli frustration that, Gat says, most people weren't ready for.

"Because of Israel's political climate, people are more prone to musical escapism than a journey that will yield the truth. There is a blockage. One promoter even threw a glass bottle at me. Our music evoked an emotion," says Gat, noting one upside: "Because our club shared an entrance with a bordello, a lot of people had orgasms while listening to Monotonix."

Monotonix reached a stalemate in Israel. "Exiled to move [to New York]," he says, "it was definitely not a choice. I couldn't make music in my home country. Good music asks the hardest questions, and people don't want to ask those questions in Tel Aviv. Tel Aviv has good food, and partying. As a musician, I need more than that."

In New York City, he found the openness he'd sought—America, it seemed, was far more prepared to release tension and tap into mayhem. By 2011, though, the band had dissolved after tearing up tours all over the States, and Gat was on his own. He started gigging everywhere, with anyone, exploring his own gritty, improvisational style. In 2013, *The Village Voice* called him "the best guitarist in New York." The mesmerizing, experimental-rock album *Director* arrived in 2015 and sent him tunneling into himself and toward *Universalists*.

Over the course of three years, Gat and his touring band recorded over 100 hours of improvisation, "some of which I've probably never even heard," he says. "The record is an organism. There was never a moment when I decided it was done." (Yeah Yeah Yeahs drummer Brian Chase, who has explored alternative Jewish music with The Sway Machinery, also signed on to play with him for a spell.)

Gat's guiding force was the relationships he developed with music from all over the world, and the musicians who made it. While field recordings—mostly the innocuous sounds of places—added texture to *Director*'s songs, Gat built new music with found sounds that spoke to something inside him. "It's so easy to find what's different in music. But I asked myself: What is similar here?"

He heard himself, for example, in a forgotten recording of a 1950s Spanish-Italian choir from Alan Lomax's archives. "Maybe an ethnomusicologist could explain why the music of an Israeli in New York in 2018 connects so strongly to music from Spain in the '50s," he says. "But I felt it."

The resulting composition is head-spinning: "Cue the Machines" builds the choir's rolled R's into a stuttering beat that jerks forward over spindly guitars and thunderous percussion. It's musical whiplash, as thrilling as a wooden rollercoaster.

"Nothing I did wasn't somewhere in the recordings already. I was trying to listen to the ideas in this music and understand what these musicians, sometimes from decades ago, would want from me to make it a true collaboration," says Gat.

He felt a vivid tie to traditional Balinese gamelan music, the nonlinear melodies of which can often sound abrasive to Western listeners. "It can totally fuck you up—everything is elastic," says Gat. "In gamelan, I heard punk-rock."

After burying himself in Balinese recordings, the white-knuckled "Cockfight" emerged. "This riff surfaced on my electric guitar [with] the same life-affirming energy. The gamelan recording in the end came afterward—I wanted to reveal my source."

His collaborations weren't just with esoteric recordings. Gat invited Eastern Medicine Singers—a Native American combo—to add their vocals live in the studio. *Universalists'* "Medicine" sprays jagged guitars across an open field of tribal chanting and hard-beating drums.

"When I could actually ask the musicians what they felt," he says, "that was much easier."

David Berman of the Silver Jews served as *Universalists'* producer, assisting mainly in the ambitious editing process. "I initially felt like I was working on four records at one time," says Gat. "[Berman] helped me realize that if I push through for years and let it rule my life, I can find the connections to make it one cohesive record."

Universalists' 10 songs are maybe most bound by their unpredictability, the sheer excitement they evoke while tumbling through a musical universe in which Gat is the sun.

"The album is about asking yourself, constantly: 'Who am I right now?' And it's not like you find out once and run with it for 60 years until you die," laughs Gat. "When the next record comes, I'll be totally different. The process continues—always."

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Soundcheck

LIVE REVIEWS AND NEWS FROM AROUND THE GLOBE *Compiled by* DEAN BUDNICK

Flying high in Los Angeles

Matt Rea

AS THE CROW FLIES

THE WILTERN
LOS ANGELES
MAY 9

When **Chris Robinson** announced that he would front a new band, **As the Crow Flies**, for a short spring tour—and that the repertoire would focus almost exclusively on songs from The Black Crowes' catalog—many viewed this as the counterpart to his brother Rich's new outfit, The Magpie Salute, which is also playing Crowes material.

Robinson recruited some old mates from the Crowes—guitarist **Audley Freed** and bassist **Andy Hess**—and retained Brotherhood drummer **Tony Leone** and keyboardist **Adam MacDougall** (also a former Crowe), then added guitar hotshot **Marcus King**. The tour arrived in Los Angeles with an established cache of classics to unleash. Opening with "Remedy," Robinson offered a set of familiar chestnuts that—like much of the two-hour performance—comfortably swung the Crowes' heavy, guitar-laden and driving rock-and-roll lumber.

Certainly, it's not a proper Crowes reunion without Rich, but from the start of the show, the packed house conjured a feeling of the high-and-mighty heyday of the 1990s. At the soundboard, the singer's star-powered fan contingent rocked right along with him.

King was deferential in the early rounds, allowing Freed to deftly peel back lick after lick on "Sting Me" and the following "Hotel Illness." They launched into the set's first trippy moment during the lead in to "Nonfiction;" Robinson, string-bean thin, bearded and flashing peace signs, swirled and stomped in pliable gyrations, appearing almost possessed by the groove. His voice was reedy and sure, singing as though he was reclaiming his throne.

The slow, staggering climb of "Sometimes Salvation" and quirky funk of "High Head Blues," set afire by MacDougall's always inventive work, pushed into a run of songs that showcased the instrumental prowess of the sextet. King brought out his slide for "Good Friday" which paired with Robinson's harmonica, as they dovetailed into Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's counterculture dispatch "Almost Cut My Hair." King delivered a flurry of fingers and heartbreaking bends before ceding to Freed, who blazed through another solo as Robinson danced in approving joy.

After another dose of Crowes crunch with "Thorn in My Pride" and "Jealous Again," Robinson tipped his hat to the "Big O" as Leone kicked off Otis Redding's "Hard to Handle." Navigating a Southern-fried segue into Joe South's "Hush" and back again, the show ended on a final wash of seething guitars. For their encore, Robinson paid homage to LA rock icons The Doors with a funky take on "Peace Frog; " Leone delivered the psychedelic spoken-word bridge with Freed and King substituting their final bursts of guitar in place of the sax solo.

As a cover, the finale played well to the regional crowd, but perhaps implied something deeper. Just as The Doors belong, in a sense, to the Southern California '60s, the pinnacle of The Black Crowes belongs to the 1990s. And, if As the Crow Flies has anything to say about it, then that pinnacle belongs as much to Chris Robinson as anyone, sibling included. ***Larson Sutton***

TRONDOSSA MUSIC & ARTS FESTIVAL

RIVERFRONT PARK
NORTH CHARLESTON, S.C.
MAY 5-6

The volume of airborne liquid during a second-set "Chilly Water" is a fair indicator of how well a venue takes care of its patrons. When **Widespread Panic** lit into that fan favorite amid an old-school second set on Sunday night, the first 50 rows got a drenching for the books. North Charleston's Riverfront Park has long been ripe for live music and, thanks to High Water and now Trondossa, it's finally being utilized. From clear views across the Cooper River to quality local food, short beer lines and free water refilling stations, the concert grounds are low-hassle and conducive to a satisfied vibe that was felt all weekend long.

Trondossa's name is a nod to the slow-rolling Aquarium Rescue Unit song. A year to the week after Col. Bruce Hampton's passing, his presence at the festival was evident and intentional, as seen in a live painting of the Colonel as a marionettist guiding Widespread onstage by featured artist **Leslie Caneda**. (According to Caneda, it's heading to the band's Brown Cat HQ for display.) Panic partnered with Live Nation to host Trondossa and the group helped select the lineup of **BIG Something**, **Margo Price** and **Sturgill Simpson** (Saturday), and **Hiss Golden Messenger**, **Moon Taxi** and Simpson (Sunday).

Despite a tempo-setting early "No Sugar Tonight/New Mother Nature" from Panic in set one and expectations of a Cinco de Mayo surprise (rumors of a mariachi band turned out to be untrue), Saturday proved to be the more mellow of the two days, but the Mexico nod in "Bust It Big" earned big cheers. A "Surprise Valley"> "Red Hot Mama" segue brought down the house during set two, yet there were moments of the band warming back up and catching their collective footing, a likely byproduct of a touring hiatus.

On Sunday, however, Panic leaned on the classics and fired hard all night. The afternoon began with Durham, N.C.'s Hiss Golden Messenger offering a set of their psychedelic Americana (including a well-placed "Franklin's Tower" tease) to an enthusiastic crowd, demonstrating readiness for a later time slot. Moon Taxi's polished, jam-informed pop-rock displayed that they're more than a band of the moment, before Sturgill returned for a second day. Although he didn't take a cue from Panic to mix up setlists—there were multiple repeats from Saturday—his "outrageously rocking band" (in **Dave Schools**' words) delivered the second helping with relentless pounding energy, even dropping hints of James Brown and Pink Floyd into moments of the jam-heavy set.

And then there was Panic, making the case for a "second annual" Trondossa in 2019 with a next-level "never miss a Sunday show" effort. From the vibey "Porch Song" opener to the projections of Charleston's Ravenel Bridge-colored skyline during "City of Dreams," they played to the idyllic sunset surroundings before introducing Simpson for "Ride Me High" and a huge "Come Together." Set two—after the "Pleas"> "Chilly Water" kickoff—featured an inspired "Airplane" from **Jimmy Herring**, a hug-a-neighbor "Genesis," and a rock-out-into-funky-dance-party "Tall Boy" and "Arleen."

Bombast and release in NYC

Dave Schools thunders at Trondossa

If the band's intention is to begin a new tradition in Charleston—and everyone in attendance surely hopes it is—then they laid one hell of a cornerstone. Cue the fireworks.

Stratton Lawrence

KING KRULE

HAMMERSTEIN BALLROOM
NEW YORK
MAY 4

Behind the organ, behind the mic or standing center stage, **Archy Marshall** (aka **King Krule**) isn't going to beg for connection—at least he didn't at his biggest New York City show to date. Even while his bandmates flailed about or stood on the lip of the stage pumping their arms in the air, demanding more volume, energy and love from an already rapt audience, Marshall wasn't going to do any of the asking himself.

But toward the end of the concert, in the lyrics to one of at least three epic set-piece tunes of the evening—the title track of his latest album, *The OOZ*—the idea of connection was exactly what he was seeking, singing, "Is anybody out there? I don't know why/ I search for you/ Could we align?"

The performance was just as much about bombast and release, with Marshall thrashing on his Fender Mustang and stomping on the stage, inflecting the gig with a dash of hardcore energy. But here was a convincing moment of sadness, of yearning for connection, for love—a potent plea made all the more believable in Marshall's ever-evocative baritone, that totally individual, slack voice that brims with Cockney attitude and hip-hop soul. But even if he was baring his soul lyrically, the audience, it seemed, was still kept at a distance.

So it was rather sweet when, near the end of "The OOZ," after one last "Could we align?" he left the stage, letting the band finish the last minute of the song, and then dipped out of view, stepped over to a young woman in the wings, held her face in his hands and kissed her on the lips as she draped her arm around his neck. Standing behind a hanging backdrop in view of only a handful of people, they swayed, kissing in each other's arms as the band played on. However authentic the anguish felt a few seconds ago, here, Marshall had found that love (or at least human connection) in real life. It was a true peek behind the curtain of the King Krule image.

The whole night had that certain romantic quality. Marshall strutted into town and straight up conquered the Hammerstein. His fans lined up and down 34th Street beforehand, then pogoed 'til the end, demanding a seemingly genuine encore ("Out Getting Ribs"—the singer's personal setlist ended with "Easy Easy"). What's so impressive about that love is that it's an affirmation of someone with a totally new and unique voice doing something different. In some ways, his music is like kryptonite to an industry that needs to categorize, to market. This is something else, and there's something in the attitude, in the presentation, in the mix of everything from squonky and even '80s-leaning jazz to the deft (and maybe

Hunter McRae (Schools), Wes Orshoski (King Krule)

even unintentional) appropriation of a classic Pink Floyd rhythm that, appropriately, *connects*.

Here's a 23-year-old kid (24 if you're reading this after August 24) who is having a moment, who looks to be in the sweet spot of his career. Marshall may be touring behind only his second King Krule album, but he's already been at it almost a decade, and the last time he played New York, he was in venues half this size. Next time, Marshall could very well be standing center stage at Radio City Music Hall. ***Wes Orshoski***

DAVID BYRNE

BENEDUM CENTER PITTSBURGH, PA. MAY 13

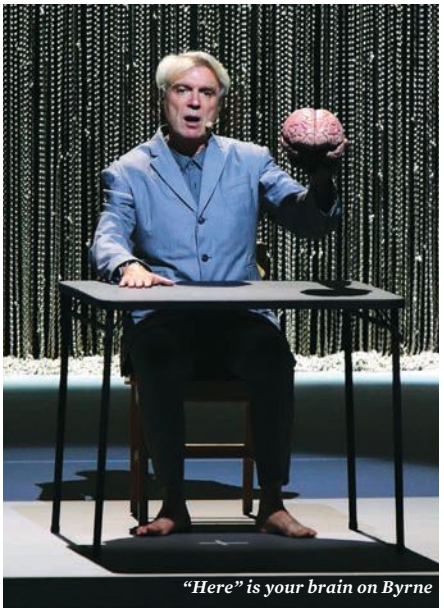
David Byrne has stated that his current tour supporting *American Utopia*, his latest solo album, is his "most ambitious" since the concerts that made up the film *Stop Making Sense*. He's put together an 11-piece backing ensemble—six percussionists, a guitarist, a bassist, a keyboardist and two singers—who are untethered by microphone stands, amplifiers and cables. Accomplishing the rare feat of blending art and entertainment, substance and silliness, immediacy and resonance, this current production pays equal attention to choreography and musicianship.

The nearly nonstop 100-minute show—which touched on everything from Talking Heads chestnuts to new compositions and unique covers—began with Byrne sitting at a table, holding a plastic replica of a human brain. As he sang "Here," he pointed out areas that can process the good, the bad and the ugly of thought and action.

The full cast then joined him for a 20-song, groove-based set that included eight Heads' classics such as: "I Zimbra," "Once in a Lifetime," "Born Under Punches" and "This Must Be the Place (Naïve Melody)." "Toe Jam" and "I Dance Like This" offered lighthearted moments, while the descriptive "Bullet" provided a heavy dose of reality.

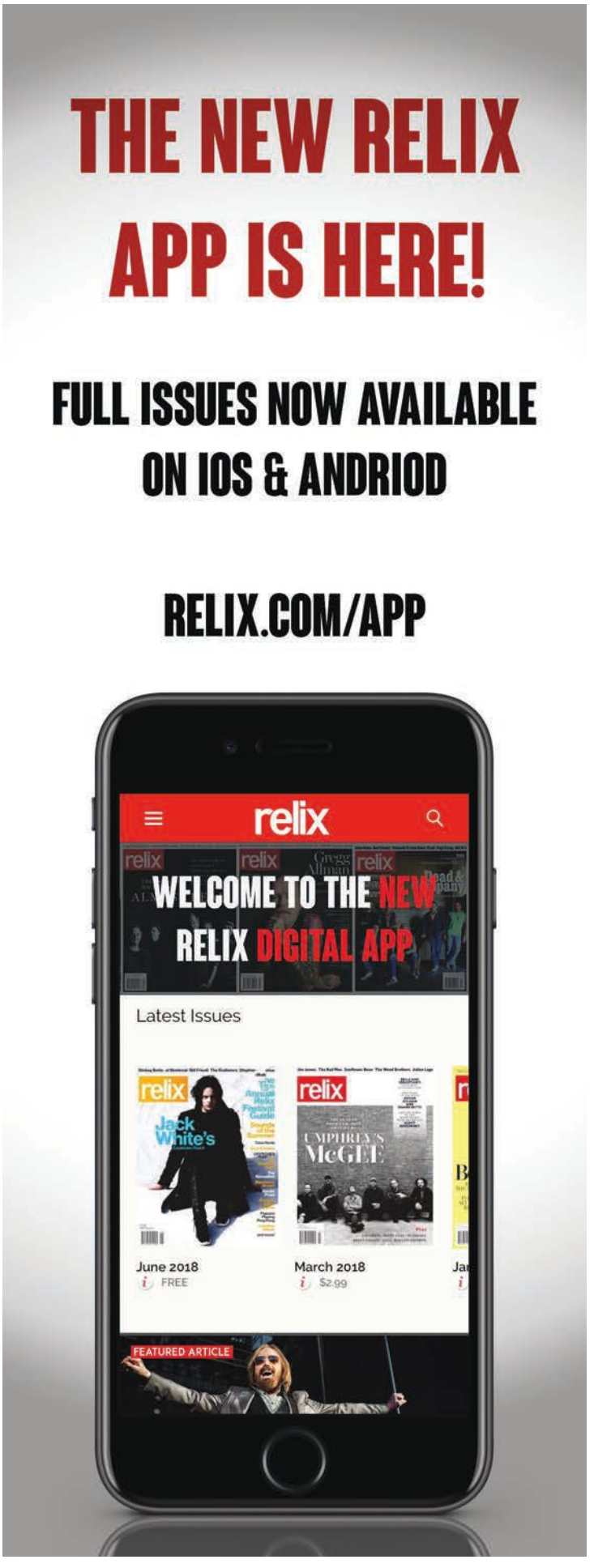
The sincerity of "Every Day Is A Miracle" and uplifting atmosphere created by the previous numbers allowed the medicine to go down easier when Byrne and company ended the night with a cover of Janelle Monáe's "Hell You Talmbout," a protest song that was "updated just a little bit" with the names of those killed by police and vigilantes.

Before launching his latest run, Byrne conducted a few presentations dubbed "Reasons to Be Cheerful." With his current live experience, he's managed to prove that there are still reasons to be cheerful, even when things seem bleak rather than utopian. ***John Patrick Gatta***



John Patrick Gatta

"Here" is your brain on Byrne



KEVIN MORBY

THE BACK ROOM AT COLECTIVO COFFEE MILWAUKEE, WIS. MAY 1

On a Tuesday night, in the comfy confines of Colectivo's Back Room in Milwaukee, **Kevin Morby** treated a sold-out crowd to an evening of tales about how to navigate a life in the city, with all of its metaphorical potholes. Morby drew on his travels as he moved between folky ballads, atmospheric jams and straightforward rock-and-rolls cuts; it's not all gloom and doom—his message inspires everyone to aim high. There is no mystery about what Morby draws his inspiration from—the songwriting of Bob Dylan and the arrangements and delivery of Lou Reed—yet he has his own distinct sound that hits every genre, whether it's soul, jam, psychedelic, folk or indie. You name it, he's got it and he pulls them all off mightily. If you want to dance, then he's got you covered. If you want to drift and dream, then that gets taken care of too. He definitely keeps the listener on their toes, with feet moving.

The concert began with the one-two punch of his two most recent releases' title tracks, "Singing Saw" and "City Music," slow-burns with crescendos highlighting the stellar guitar work of **Meg Duffy**. While the former song evokes the feeling of driving through a sleepy Southwest town with tumbleweeds rolling by, the latter tune features variations in direction and vibe, with Duffy and Morby drawing energy from each other as they move closer together physically. On this night, their verve spilled into the crowd and could be seen in the heads rising and shoulders swaying.

Just when things were slowing down a bit with "Crybaby"—the selection paired well with the hand-embroidered suit with eyes and teardrops Morby sported—the band launched into "Harlem River," a celebration of NYC. Like "City Music," this song takes the listener on a wild, sonic journey. The physical space styled in the song seems secondary to the inhabitants and the connections they make with each other. Morby's most recognizable track, "I Have Been to the Mountain," followed, juxtaposing groovy vibes with a solemn story of needless gun violence.

Kevin Morby brings "City Music" to Milwaukee

To end the set, Morby took the stage, sans band members, and finished with the folk ballad "Beautiful Stranger," which called for love in face of viciousness, followed by Townes Van Zandt's "When She Don't Need Me." For an encore, the whole band returned for three more, including the beautiful and adventurous "Dorothy." While Morby indicated that this was his first visit to Milwaukee, he assured the enthralled crowd that it wouldn't be his last.

Stephen Bloch

PATTY GRIFFIN

RED CLAY MUSIC FOUNDRY DULUTH, GA. MAY 11

"I went to work, I worked all day/ When I wanted to run, I stayed/ I kept the promises I made," **Patty Griffin** sang during "Faithful Son," taking on her father's point of view. She had set the table for this powerful number by admitting to the audience that, despite having a deep respect for him, she didn't know him as well as she had wished when he passed—he only had sporadic lucidity during her final times with him—and the emotion in her vocal delivery was palpable.

Griffin's stark honesty about even the most painful of experiences is only part of why she has such a unique relationship with her famously loyal fanbase. She is as real and refreshing as the morning sun. She takes the audience on emotional journeys and her crowd loves her for it. She sings about sorrow-filled situations in a way that somehow does not render the listener sad.

"Faithful Son" was preceded by "Ohio," a song that she co-wrote with Robert Plant. Inspired by a Toni Morrison novel, "Ohio" is set in pre-Civil War America. The idyllic, sold-out venue was filled with patrons who paid rapt attention as Griffin immersed herself in the song, with the superb accompaniment of **David Pulkingham**, Alejandro Escovedo's former guitarist, helping capture the dark and foreboding feel of this piece.

Griffin also snuck in "Our Love Is a Dud," one of several unreleased songs performed this evening (a hilarious ode to a disappointing mate who drinks "like a fish" and eats "like a cow") in between "Ohio" and the brand-new "Black Beard Murder Ballad," (an ominous tale modeled after the European fable about the plight of a wife of a murderous nobleman). The latter showcased Pulkingham's strongest playing of the night, and Griffin's vocal delivery gained intensity, which seemed to mirror the wife's increasingly dire situation. This one, along with "The Wheel" (about an impending future doom deeply rooted in the past), and "Had a Good Reason" (inspired by a dream about Billie Holiday) may well be on Griffin's next record. She played only three songs from her most recent, and most eclectic release, 2015's *Servant of Love,* including the title track, during which she sat at the piano while Pulkingham offered exquisitely subtle accompaniment. This song is Griffin at her best: vulnerable to, but not a victim of, love.

Pulkingham's range was a key part of the show. His guitar work flirted with a flamenco feel on "Mama's Worried," and he moved to piano for the inspiring "Up to the Mountain," a song about the impact of Martin Luther King Jr.'s final speech—which felt particularly appropriate in the state where Dr. King was born.

Rob Turner

Patty Griffin: real and refreshing

CJ Foeckler (Morby), Tom Garland (Griffin)

The 18th Annual Relix

Festival Guide Set IV

Edited by **MATT INMAN**

We may have reached the dog days of summer, but festival season isn't quite done with us yet. Though they might not come as fast and furious as in June and July, big name events—from San Francisco's Outside Lands to Virginia's Lockn'—and smaller boutique gatherings still have their place in August and September, along with a number of brand-new festivals to add to your bucket list, like Denver's Grandoozy, Austin's Waterloo and Cleveland's InCuya.

All listings are up-to-date as of press time. Be sure to check out the 2018 Festival Guide Encore in our next issue, along with our online postings at relix.com/festivals. If you see a **(R)** next to an event, then come visit us onsite at the *Relix* booth!

Bestival
8/2-5 // Dorset, United Kingdom
London Grammar, Silk City, M.I.A., Grace Jones, Plan B, Chaka Khan, First Aid Kit, Mura Masa, Thundercat, more bestival.net

Summer Meltdown
8/2-5 // Darrington, WA
Bassnectar, Big Gigantic, Greensky Bluegrass, Lettuce, Beats Antique, Trevor Hall, Twiddle, Fruition, Papadosio, Pimps of Joytime, more summermeltdownfest.com

Guster-On The Ocean Weekend
8/3-5 // Portland, ME
Guster, Kishi Bashi, The Secret Sisters, more ontheoceanfest.com

Travelers' Rest
8/4-5 // Missoula, MT
The Decemberists, Death Cab for Cutie, Jeff Tweedy, Mavis Staples, Tune-Yards, Whitney, Parquet Courts, Tinariwen, more travelersrestfest.com

Øya
8/7-11 // Oslo, Norway
Arctic Monkeys, Arcade Fire, Kendrick Lamar, Jenny Lewis, Grizzly Bear, St. Vincent, Patti Smith, Khruangbin, more oyafestivalen.no/en

Boardmasters
8/8-12 // Cornwall, United Kingdom
Catfish and the Bottlemen, The Chemical Brothers, George Ezra, Kano, Years & Years, Rag'N'Bone Man, more boardmasters.com

Sziget
8/8-15 // Budapest, Hungary
Arctic Monkeys, Gorillaz, Kendrick Lamar, Lana Del Rey, Mumford & Sons, Shawn Mendes, Dua Lipa, Kygo, more szigetfestival.com

Huichica Hudson

Shadefest
8/9-11 // Elkins, WV
TAUK, Consider the Source, The Southern Belles, CBDB, The Mantras, Of Tomorrow, Kendall Street Company, more shadefest.com

Way Out West
8/9-11 // Göthenburg, Sweden
Kendrick Lamar, Arctic Monkeys, Lykke Li, Arcade Fire, Patti Smith, Iggy Pop, St. Vincent, Kamasi Washington, more wayoutwest.se

Boomtown
8/9-12 // Hampshire, United Kingdom
Gorillaz, Die Antwoord, Ben Harper & The Innocent Criminals, Jimmy Cliff, Limp Bizkit, Amadou & Mariam, Billy Bragg, more boomtownfair.co.uk

Fish Out of Water
8/10-11 // Taos, NM
Leftover Salmon, Dumpstaphunk, David Lowery and Johnny Hickman, Trout Steak Revival, Poor Man's Whiskey, more taosmesabrewing.com

Wild Woods
8/10-11 // Croydon, NH
Lotus, Emancipator Ensemble, Pink Talking Fish, Yheti, Orchard Lounge, Kung Fu, Mr. Bill, Consider the Source, Moon Hooch, more wildwoodsfest.com

For the Funk of It
8/10-12 // Belden, CA
Big Sam's Funky Nation, Five Alarm Funk, The Nibblers, Vokab Kompany, Mojo Green & Hornmageddon, more ftffest.com

(R) Outside Lands
8/10-12 // San Francisco, CA
The Weeknd, Florence + The Machine, Janet Jackson, Future, Beck, ODESZA, Bon Iver, Portugal. The Man, N.E.R.D., CHVRCHES, more sfoutsidelands.com

Brussels Summer
8/14-18 // Brussels, Belgium
Shaka Ponk, Thirty Seconds to Mars, Orelsan, dEUS, Romeo Elvis x Le Motel, Calexico, Arsenal, Fantastic Negrito, more bsf.be

The Big What
8/16-18 // Pittsboro, NC
Big Something, Sunsquabi, TAUK, Cory Wong, Consider the Source, Funk You, Joe Hertler & The Rainbow Seekers, more thebigwhat.com

FM4 Frequency
8/16-19 // St. Pölten, Austria
Gorillaz, Imagine Dragons, Macklemore, Kygo, Hardwell, Die Antwoord, Casper, Kaleo, Bastille, Flogging Molly, more frequency.at

Green Man
8/16-19 // Brecon Beacons, United Kingdom
The War On Drugs, Fleet Foxes, King Gizzard and The Lizard Wizard, Grizzly Bear, Dirty Projectors, John Grant, more greenman.net

Maha
8/17-18 // Omaha, NE
Weezer, Father John Misty, TV on the Radio, The Kills, Tune-Yards, ZZ Ward, Benjamin Booker, Hurray for the Riff Raff, more mahamusicfestival.com

Moonlight Musicfest
8/17-18 // Big Sky, MT
Grace Potter, The Wood Brothers, Bruce Hornsby & the Noisemakers, Chris Robinson Brotherhood, Sam Bush Band, The Suffers, more moonlightmusicfest.com

(R) Curveball
8/17-19 //Watkins Glen, NY
Phish phish.com

Sounds of the Summer

Sylvan Esso

For Amelia Meath, creating art is a "use it or lose it" situation–and there's no way she's letting her hot streak simmer. As one half of the North Carolina electro alt-pop duo Sylvan Esso alongside producer Nick Sanborn, Meath has kept herself moving full speed ahead since their slinky, minimalist self-titled album dropped in 2014, but never more than in the past year. Sylvan Esso's sophomore LP, 2017's *What Now*, quickly climbed up the Billboard charts, garnering universal rave reviews, earning the band a Grammy nomination for Best Dance/Electronic Album (they lost to Kraftwerk) and demanding an increasingly unrelenting tour schedule across the world.

Now it's spring 2018. Meath and Sanborn are back at home in Durham without another show for a few weeks–but the creative urge won't let them rest.

"Time on tour is so full, even if you're sitting still, you're preparing to do something. It's an illusion of progress that's addicting," Meath says with a laugh. "So at home, I really like intricate cooking projects that take at least a full day. I'll make a huge batch of hand-folded dumplings and invite people for a dumpling party, or make ramen broth, which takes hours because many types of animals are in there. I'm working on getting my matzo balls bigger."

She calls her at-home endeavors "low stakes creativity"–Meath is also planning out the political structure of a "Dungeons and Dragons" campaign over which she'll preside–but music is always in her crosshairs. After releasing *What Now* in April 2017, Sylvan Esso returned to the studio that summer to reexamine their songs with more cooks in the kitchen–all were musician friends of the band, including Wye Oak's Jenn Wasner, and Molly Sarle and Alexandra Sauser-Monnig of Mountain Man, Meath's folk trio from her days at Bennington College.

"There's nothing like working in a studio for a year on songs to make you not like them very much," says Meath. "So we taught them to our friends to see what they'd do with them, and it breathed brand new life into the songs. It created new peaks and valleys of emotion that we weren't hearing anymore."

The resulting *Echo Mountain Sessions* EP blew even more space into Sylvan Esso's already atmospheric songs. A jagged saxophone poked holes into the meditative soul of *What Now* single "Die Young;" they recast "Slack Jaw," originally a bed of low-humming electronics and layered vocals, as a gorgeous piano ballad.

The experimentation continued that year, and the duo dropped remixes from Rhye, Audion and more, and ended 2017 with an intimate, acoustic cover of "There Are Many Ways to Say I Love You" from *Mister Rodgers' Neighborhood*.

In early-2018, Sylvan Esso

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released "PARAD(w/m)E," a typically infectious tune for the duo: Sanborn eschews the maximalism of radio pop for a smattering of blips and beeps over a hand-clapping beat while Meath toys with playground-chant melodies recast in a hip-hop lens.

"P-a-r-a-d with me," she sings, her grin almost audible. "There's nothing left to ruin, yeah we finally got free/ How's that for manifesting our destiny?"

The chorus seems to taunt the universe for making Merth doubt that Sylvan Esso would be headlining festivals and selling out tours. With two albums out and a growing feeling that the format will eventually be obsolete, Meath finds herself "moving on a different plane—things feel much more assured," she says. "When you make a first record, it's easy for people to say,

'That was good,' then forget about you. With a second record, you're telling them, 'Hey, I'm going to be consistently making cool songs for you to feel your feelings to, I swear.' Here—I proved it. I did it again. And again."

Naturally, though, success is never assured in the music business. And Sylvan Esso will continue to carve out their weird little corner of the electronic music universe—they've already started discussing album number three. Meath is also in the process of wrapping up Mountain Man's first album since 2010, which Sanborn will be on hand to produce. Of course, Sylvan Esso will tour all summer, packing in festival dates and theaters alike.

"We've already been given the universe's greatest gift: Somehow, we get to be musicians for a job. But you always have to push, keep it going, and keep ourselves entertained and excited. If you lose that, you just start making bad art," says Meath, with a pause. "But still—we're trying to get better at resting."

Justin Jacobs

You can catch Sylvan Esso at Osheaga, XPoNential and elsewhere this summer.

Hoxeyville
8/17-19 // Wellston, MI
Dawes, Leftover Salmon, The Infamous Stringdusters, One Night Stand Band feat. Phoffman + Dave Bruzza, Billy Strings, more
hoxeyville.com

Lowlands
8/17-19 // Biddinghuizen, Netherlands
Gorillaz, Kendrick Lamar, The War on Drugs, N.E.R.D, Bonobo, Grizzly Bear, Dua Lipa, Dropkick Murphys, more
lowlands.nl

MS Dockville
8/17-19 // Hamburg, Germany
alt-J, Bonobo, Nick Murphy (f.k.a. Chet Faker), Olli Schulz, First Aid Kit, Cigarettes After Sex, Rhye, more.
msdockville.de

Rocky Mountain Folks
8/17-19 // Lyons, CO
Indigo Girls, Regina Spektor, Jeff Tweedy, Los Lobos, The Milk Carton Kids, Tinariwen, Martin Sexton Trio, River Whyless, more
bluegrass.com/folks

Hot August
8/18 // Cockeysville, MD
The Revivalists, Trampled by Turtles, Karl Denson's Tiny Universe, The Marcus King Band, Cris Jacobs Band, more
hotaugustmusicfestival.com

Summer Sonic
8/18-19 // Tokyo & Osaka, Japan
Beck, Chance the Rapper, Tame Impala, Queens of the Stone Age, St. Vincent, Nine Inch Nails, Noel Gallagher's High Flying Circus, more
summersonic.com

Zurich Open Air
8/22-25 // Zurich, Switzerland
Imagine Dragons, Kendrick Lamar, Justice, Die Antwoord, alt-J, The War on Drugs, Incubus, Bonobo, more.
zurichopenair.ch

Fayetteville Roots
8/22-26 // Fayetteville, AR
Gillian Welch, Gregory Alan Isakov, Josh Ritter, Turnpike Troubadours, Booker T. Jones, Mavis Staples, Del McCoury Band, more
therootsfest.org

Creamfields
8/23-26 // Daresbury, United Kingdom
Major Lazer, Diplo, Dillon Francis, The Chainsmokers, Fatboy Slim, Galantis, Tiësto, Alesso, more
creamfields.com

(R) Lockn'
8/23-26 // Arrington, VA
Dead & Company, Umphrey's McGee, Widespread Panic, Lettuce, George Clinton & P-Funk, Tedeschi Trucks Band, more. Locknfestival.com

Festival Facts: Not only will this year's Lockn' feature some stellar planned (and unplanned) collaborations–including Dead & Company welcoming saxophonist Branford Marsalis and Umphrey's McGee teaming up with drummer Jason Bonham, son of Led Zeppelin's legendary John Bonham–but the festival will also present one of George Clinton's last performances, before he retires from touring with his iconic group.

Jam in the Trees
8/24-25 // Black Mountain, NC
The Travelin' McCourys, Jerry Douglas, Shooter Jennings, Elizabeth Cook, Jane Kramer, Gangstagrass, The Stray Birds, more
jaminthetrees.com

Huichica Hudson
8/24-26 // Hudson Valley, NY
Allah-Las, Bettye LaVette, Circles Around the Sun, Mercury Rev, Hailu Mergia, Amen Dunes, Robyn Hitchcock, more
hudson.huichica.com

Mysteryland Netherlands
8/24-26 // Haarlemmermeer, Netherlands
Alesso, Dimitri Vegas, Fatboy Slim, Hardwell, Galantis, Headhunterz, Loco Dice, Paul Van Dyk, more
www.mysteryland.nl

Reading and Leeds
8/24-26 // Reading & Leeds, United Kingdom
Fall Out Boy, Kendrick Lamar, Kings of Leon, Travis Scott, Panic! At the Disco, The Kooks, Dua Lipa, The Wombats, more
readingandleedsfestival.com

Rock En Seine
8/24-26 // Paris, France
Justice, Macklemore, Post Malone, Thirty Seconds to Mars, Die Antwoord, King Gizzard and The Lizard Wizard, First Aid Kit, more
rockenseine.com

Victorious
8/24-26 // Portsmouth, United Kingdom
The Libertines, Kaiser Chiefs, The Prodigy, Brian Wilson, Paul Weller, Paloma Faith, Years & Years, Friendly Fires, more
victoriousfestival.co.uk

Shadow of the City
8/25 // Asbury Park, NJ
Bleachers, Hayley Kiyoko, Julien Baker, Turnover, Beach Slang, Clams Casino, Forth Wanderers, more shadowofthe.city

InCuya
8/25-26 // Cleveland, OH
New Order, The Avett Brothers, SZA, AWOLNATION, The Revivalists, Cake, K. Flay, J Roddy Walston & The Business, more incuya.com

Project Pabst
8/26-27 // Portland, OR
Iggy Pop, Beck, Die Antwoord, Nas, Father John Misty, Spoon, FIDLAR, Whitney, Noname, San Fermin, more
portland.projectpabst.com

Electric Fields
8/30-9/1 // Thornhill, United Kingdom
Noel Gallagher's High Flying Birds, Leftfield, James, Teenage Fanclub, Young Fathers, Idlewild, Ezra Furman, more
electricfieldsfestival.com

Bumbershoot
8/31-9/2 // Seattle, WA
J. Cole, The Chainsmokers, SZA, Fleet Foxes, Lil Wayne, Illenium, Portugal. The Man, RL Grime, Phoenix, more
bumbershoot.com

Electric Picnic
8/31-9/2 // Stradbally, Ireland
Kendrick Lamar, Massive Attack, N.E.R.D, Dua Lipa, Ben Howard, St. Vincent, King Krule, The Kooks, CHVRCHES, more
electricpicnic.ie

Electric Zoo
8/31-9/2 // New York, NY
Alesso, Kaskade, Martin Garrix, Marshmello, Tiësto, Virtual Self, Zeds Dead, Illenium, Gramatik, more
electriczoo.com

(R) JAS Labor Day Experience
8/31-9/2 // Snowmass Village, CO
Lionel Richie, Jack Johnson, Zac Brown Band, Michael Franti & Spearhead, Fitz & the Tantrums, Gary Clark Jr., more
jazzaspensnowmass.org

Adirondack Independence
9/1-2 // Lake George, NY
Pigeons Playing Ping Pong, Keller Williams, Pink Talking Fish, Badfish, lespecial, Lucid, Formula 5, more
adkmusicfest.com

Hopscotch
9/6-8 // Raleigh, NC
MC50, Miguel, Grizzly Bear, Thundercat, Liz Phair, Waxahatchee, Speedy Ortiz, Belle and Sebastian, Real Estate, more
hopscotchmusicfest.com

Big Blues Bender
9/6-9 // Las Vegas, NV
Kenny Wayne Shepherd Band, JJ Grey & Mofro, Tab Benoit, Samantha Fish, The Marcus King Band, Ana Popovic, more
bigbluesbender.com

Sam Medina

Sounds of the Summer

Rebelution

In "Trap Door," a loose, splashy cut from Rebelution's upcoming sixth album, *Free Rein*, singer/guitarist Eric Rachmany lets some frank wisdom fly: "Goddamn, it's a long, long road/ That never occurred to me/ You're looking for that shortcut/ I don't want to cause a scene."

It sounds a bit like Rachmany talking to the younger version of himself that helped found Rebelution back in 2004, when the band members were just students at the University of California Santa Barbara. The truth is, Rebelution never needed the advice. The band has slowly and consistently grown from local reggae-rock heroes to international scene staples, along with peers like SOJA and Slightly Stoopid, by sticking to a set of core musical values: Keep it positive, make it fun and don't hold on too tight to reggae rules.

Free Rein, released jointly between Rebelution's 87 Music and Easy Star Records, arrives on the heels of 2016's *Falling Into Place*, then the band's biggest breakthrough to date, earning them a Grammy nomination for Best Reggae Album.

From his San Francisco home, Rachmany says that even a Grammy couldn't sway their steady evolution. "If we make good, honest music that we enjoy ourselves, we trust it'll be a good product in the end," he says. "It's nice to be recognized for our hard work, but I never write music for the sake of reaching any demographic."

While some bands eschew the album-tour-break-album cycle in 2018, Rebelution embraces it, largely because, as Rachmany says, "The writing is always happening, year-round. There are never breaks."

The process flows about as free and easy as Rebelution's brand of bouncing, sunny pop-reggae—and they owe it, in part, to Umphrey's McGee. It was the jamband stalwarts who first introduced Rebelution to the notion of setting up a functional, backstage jam room on a tour in 2010.

"They had a whole jam set up in the green room—they'd go from jamming at soundcheck, then bring the jam backstage. We totally emulated that," says Rachmany.

"After you go on so many tours, you start to wonder what we're doing with our time," adds drummer Wesley Finley. "How could our time be better spent than sitting on the bus, watching a movie? If we want an album out next year, let's work on it now."

As such, Rebelution's last few albums have been written and assembled through jam sessions during soundchecks across the country, then fine-tuned backstage—and eventually brought to a studio when the songs were already worn in. *Free Rein*'s 12 tracks are infectiously laid back, from the echoing, low-down dub of "Rise on Top" to the acoustic oceanside folk of "Healing."

Aside from three songs produced with the help of Jamaican producers Winta James and Don Corleon, Rachmany says the band had more hands-on input in creating *Free Rein* than ever before. But Rebelution is an army of equals.

"We've reached a point in our career where we know exactly how we want things to sound—and how to obtain those sounds. But it's entirely democratic," says Finley. "All the way down to who gets the best bed on tour—it's us four, all chipping in. In the studio, there are always times where three guys like something that you're vehemently against. But we're all in a relationship with three other guys. How do you make it work? You make compromises."

The members of Rebelution have lent to their names to a variety of products over the years, including their new line of marijuana oils, pens, grinders and vaporizers. They also recently forged a new relationship with cannabis connoisseurs FlavRx.

"They gave us a lot of flavors to choose from. It was an awesome experimenting experience," laughs Rachmany. "We had some time to sit with them—it wasn't all in one day."

The band settled on Sour Tsunami Sativa and Cali-O Indica as the oils most representative of Rebelution's vibe, and started taking orders.

For Rachmany, Rebelution's music is a tool to help change minds staunchly set against legalizing marijuana—and their oils simply help the sea change float along.

"Music is a powerful tool. You don't just read an article and say, 'I'm in,'" he says. "But you see people at our shows using cannabis and being nonviolent, getting themselves home safely, being responsible—it might just change your mind. I'm proud of what we've done. We talked about being cannabis advocates 14 years back."

And what would he say if he had U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions sitting before him?

"I'd ask him why all these over-the-counter drugs and these super-addictive pills are legal. It'd be a long conversation. Then I'd start with one of our oil cartridges," he says. "Or I might just give him a dab and watch him go nuts." ***Justin Jacobs***

You can catch Rebelution at Levitate, Reggae Rise Up Utah, Lollapalooza, Dry Diggings, The Bright Side Festival and elsewhere.

Dancefestopia
9/6-9 // La Cygne, KS
Adventure Club, Flux Pavilion, Illenium, Rezz, Snails, Zeds Dead, Manic Focus, Space Jesus, 12th Planet, more
dancefestopia.com

Festival No. 6
9/6-9 // Portmeirion, United Kingdom
The The, Friendly Fires, Franz Ferdinand, Hot Chip Megamix, Jessie Ware, The Charlatans, Everything Everything, more
festivalnumber6.com

(R) Waterloo
9/7-9 // Austin, TX
The String Cheese Incident, Joe Russo's Almost Dead, Railroad Earth, The Motet, Boombox, TAUK, Marco Benevento, more waterloofest.com
Festival Facts: One of several brand-new festivals included in this guide, Waterloo promises to bring jam fans to Austin's Carson Creek Ranch with three nights of The String Cheese Incident and Joe Russo's Almost Dead's first-ever show in Texas. Also, be sure to check out the event's Relix Stage, where acts like TAUK, The Motet, Perpetual Groove and more will be holding it down.

Big River Get Down
9/8 // Hamilton, OH
The Revivalists, Samantha Fish, Andy Frasco and The U.N., Jennifer Hartswick & Nick Cassarino Duo, Naughty Professor, more
bigrivergetdown.com

Lollapalooza Berlin
9/8-9 // Berlin, Germany
The Weeknd, Kraftwerk, Imagine Dragons, K.I.Z., The National, David Guetta, Kygo, Liam Gallagher, Dua Lipa, more lollapaloozade.com

LouFest
9/8-9 // St. Louis, MO
Lineup TBA loufest.com

Moon River
9/8-9 // Chattanooga, TN
The Avett Brothers, The Head and the Heart, Drew Holcomb and the Neighbors, Trampled by Turtles, Margo Price, Mavis Staples, more
moonriverfestival.com

Harvest Jazz & Blues
9/11-16 // Fredericton, New Brunswick
Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats, Steve Earle & The Dukes, Blackberry Smoke, Mavis Staples, The Magpie Salute, more
harvestjazzandblues.com

CityFolk
9/12-16 // Ottawa, Ontario
David Byrne, Tedeschi Trucks Band, Trampled By Turtles, The Decemberists, Nick Murphy (Chet Faker), Tune-Yards, more
cityfolkfestival.com

Rifflandia
9/13-16 // Victoria, British Columbia, Canada
High Noon to Midnight, Daniel Caesar, The Harpoonist & The Axe Murderer, The Zolas, Mix Master Mike, Bishop Briggs, more
rifflandia.com

Middle Waves
9/14-15 // Fort Wayne, IN
Lineup TBA middlewaves.com

FreshGrass
9/14-16 // North Adams, MA
Trampled by Turtles, Yonder Mountain String Band, Indigo Girls, Ricky Skaggs and Kentucky Thunder, Rhiannon Giddens, Steep Canyon Rangers, more
freshgrass.com

Grandoozy
9/14-16 // Denver, CO
Kendrick Lamar, Stevie Wonder, Florence + The Machine, The Chainsmokers, Logic, Sturgill Simpson, Phoenix, The War on Drugs, more
grandoozy.com
Festival Facts: Superfly, the co-creators of Bonnaroo in Tennessee and Outside Lands in San Francisco, has launched a promising new endeavor out west, bringing their usual mix of modern favorites and throwback icons to the Rocky Mountains.

KAABOO
9/14-16 // Del Mar, CA
Foo Fighters, Imagine Dragons, Katy Perry, Robert Plant & The Sensational Space Shifters, Halsey, Post Malone, N.E.R.D, Incubus, more
kaaboodelmar.com

Pickin' in the Pines
9/14-16 // Flagstaff, AZ
Del McCoury Band, Béla Fleck, The Infamous Stringdusters, The Travelin' McCourys, Seldom Scene, Jeff Austin Band, The Grateful Ball, more
pickininthepines.org

Riot Fest
9/14-16 // Chicago, IL
Blink-182, Beck, Elvis Costello & The Imposters, Incubus, Interpol, Blondie, Alkaline Trio, Dropkick Murphys, Bleachers, more
riotfest.org

Telluride Blues & Brews
9/14-16 // Telluride, CO
Robert Plant & The Sensational Space Shifters, Ben Harper & Charlie Musselwhite, Gov't Mule,Booker T.'s Stax Revue, JJ Grey & Mofro, more
telluridebluesbrews.com

Wormtown
9/14-16 // Greenfield, MA
Leftover Salmon, The Original Wailers, Max Creek, Keller Williams, Pink Talking Fish, Kung Fu, The Skatalites, The Grass Is Dead, more
wormtownmusicfestival.com

Festival at the Farm
9/15-16 // Canton, MA
Amos Lee, Dawes, Trampled by Turtles, Martin Sexton, Mandolin Orange, Joseph, Amy Helm, The Wild Reeds, more festivalatthefarm.com

Whale Rock
9/15-16 // Templeton, CA
Aloe Blacc, Lake Street Dive, Orgone, Fruition, Con Brio, Rayland Baxter, Joey Dosik, Mipso, Jade Jackson, more
whalerockmusicfestival.com

Grand Point North
9/15-16 // Burlington, VT
Grace Potter, Nathaniel Rateliff & The Night Sweats, The Magpie Salute, Caroline Rose, Darlingside, Mt. Joy, Sister Sparrow & The Dirty Birds, more
grandpointnorth.com

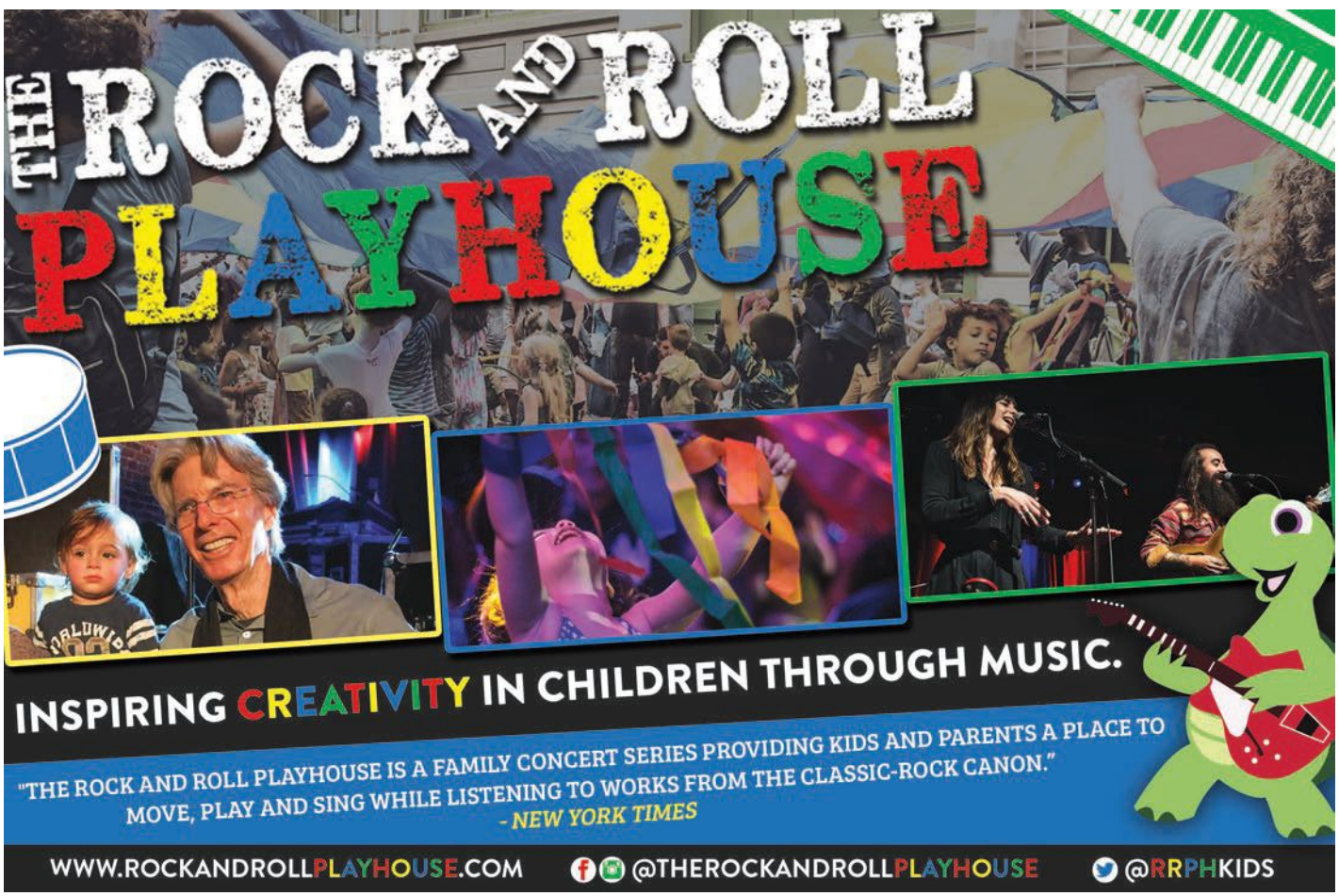
Resonance
9/20-22 // Thornville, OH
Papadosio, Brain Damaged Eggmen, EOTO, Random Rab, Melvin Seals and JGB, Kung Fu, TAUK, Pink Talking Fish, more resonancemusicfest.com
Festival Facts: Brain Damaged Eggmen—consisting of Umphrey's McGee's Brendan Bayliss, Jake Cinninger and Kris Myers, plus The Disco Biscuits' Marc Brownstein and Aron Magner—will reunite for the first time since Summer Camp 2012 to bring the music of The Beatles and Pink Floyd to Ohio for their only appearance in 2018.

Cayuga Sound
9/21-22 // Ithaca, NY
X Ambassadors, Young the Giant, Matt and Kim, Sofi Tukker, Talib Kweli, BUDDY, Morgxn, Knew, No Comply, more
cayugasoundfestival.com

Freaks for the Festival
9/21-22 // Big Sur, CA
Chris Robinson Brotherhood, Beachwood Sparks, Once & Future Band, Cosmic Twang, more
folkyeah.com/freaks4sur

Hometown Get Down
9/21-22 // Clarksburg, MD
Cris Jacobs Band, Steal Your Peach, Bumpin' Uglies, The Dirty Grass Players, Delirious George, Jah Works, more
hometowngetdown.org

Imagine
9/21-23 // Hampton, GA
Armin Van Buuren, GRiZ, Alesso, Zhu, Cashmere Cat, Jai Wolf, Galantis, RL Grime, Zeds Dead, EOTO, Lotus, more
imaginefestival.com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MOMENTS OF TRANSFERENCE

An Easter tradition turns into an everlasting mediation on music, film and metaphors.

By **ALEXIS TAYLOR**

MY FAMILY WATCHED Pasolini's film *Il Vangelo Secondo Matteo* so many times at Easter when I was growing up that it became a symbol for that time of year. "Shall we watch *The Pasolini*?" my mum would ask, referring to it as if it was *the version* of the Christ story or, perhaps, also, as if it were his only work. (My mum was thankfully unaware of *Salo* or even *Edipo Re* back then, otherwise, it might have been quite a different Easter ritual.) Of course, this question did not require an answer.

From the first time I watched the film, I was mesmerized by its use of music: of Bach's "St Matthew Passion;" a haunting rendition of the spiritual "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" by someone, at that time, unknown to both me, and seemingly, the back of the VHS box or the film credits themselves; and later on in the film, the twanging bottle-neck acoustic-guitar playing accompanied by the wordless moans of its performer. What I didn't realize, growing up, was how original this must have seemed at the time the film was first released—taking preexisting, recognizable and (relatively) obscure records, and placing them heavy-handedly centerstage in scenes depicting the most famous moments of Jesus Christ's story. I was very affected by them—they made the scenes incredibly powerful, in combination with the raw performances from the cast of non-actors—and at times, the use of music created a fairly absurd atmosphere in its juxtaposition of place, story and musical accompaniment. I remember seeing the film again some years later in the cinema—most people watching quietly with some weeping while one offered a knowing laugh as "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" played accompanying scenes of Mary, baby Jesus and Joseph as the wisemen arrive to view. (This wise viewer saw Pasolini being bold and playful, as well as melodramatic.)

I tried in vain for many years to trace the origins of the film's music. Billie Holiday was mentioned in the credits, but it appeared that she had been sloppily substituted in place of the (unknown to me) performer of "Motherless Child." This irritated me. The credits didn't mention many of my other favorite pieces of music. I wanted to discover the origins to explore its transformative powers further.

I made a pilgrimage to The Record Album, Brighton's specialist in soundtrack LPs. "I only deal in perfection," the elderly gentleman behind the counter told me as he opened a mint-condition copy of Kurosawa's *Ran*, to display the fact that it had never been played. (He was actually appalled to hear some static noise...!) "I can get hold of that Pasolini soundtrack for you, but it only contains the classical stuff," he told me. My name and number went down on a waiting list, but no news ever came.

When I was a student at Jesus College, I had access to the university library, and rather than concentrating on my curricular studies, for a brief period, I would look up every book they had on Pasolini. These were, of course, not all filed next to each other in a "film" section, ordered by subject or even director. No, this was one of only two libraries in the U.K. that attempted to keep in stock one copy of every book published! So I would have to travel all across the vast interior of the phallic-shaped giant tower, designed by Giles Gilbert Scott, and scour through each page and reference of *Il Vangelo* to see if any music was noted in any detail. Eventually, I found one book of about 12 that mentioned the performer I was most interested in, the singer of "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child."

The singer was Odetta, who I was then as unfamiliar with as the label copy writers for each edition of the film. I was so pleased to discover who was singing this song that had been haunting me for years, and that Blind Willie Johnson was the performer of the acoustic blues piece, "Dark Was the Night, Cold Was the Ground," used in another powerful scene. Predating websites such as Wikipedia, Discogs and the app Shazam (all of which would have made my life infinitely easier), I had finally gotten some helpful information. I set out researching Odetta's back catalog, and ordered a used copy of her album *Odetta At Carnegie Hall* from Netsounds.com that featured the song in question. I did, of course, hope that there would be other recordings on the same LP of a similar nature to "Motherless Child," but was quite disappointed by the rest of the live album. Nonetheless, this became one of my most precious records, and I would play it to close DJ sets at people's house parties in the Romsey Terrace area of Cambridge. It didn't really fill the floor but didn't clear it either.

Blind Willie Johnson's song, and its use in this film, clearly influenced Ry Cooder's use of music in *Paris, Texas* years later. Similarly, Pasolini's use of Bach's "St. Matthew Passion" influenced Scorsese. (Pasolini features it prominently in his first film *Accattone* and *Il Vangelo Second Matteo*, and Scorsese, an outspoken Pasolini fan, uses it in the opening scene of *Casino*.) I am not sure whether it was Pasolini himself—or if there was a musical director working on the film who chose these pieces alongside Missa Luba's "Gloria" by Les Troubadours du Roi Baudouin, and other fantastic but musically eclectic pieces—but they seem to transform the scenes radically. And now, rather like the annual home film screenings of *The Pasolini* becoming symbolic of Easter time itself for my mum, they serve as both perfect metaphors and moments of transference for the images they accompany, as well as symbols of how we use music in almost all modern film.

Sylvain Deleu

Alexis Taylor has served as Hot Chip's lead singer and keyboardist since the band's formation. In April, Domino Records released his fourth solo album, Beautiful Thing*, which was produced by DFA co-founder Tim Goldsworthy.*

RELIX DIGITAL SAMPLER

Download the tracks for free at relix.com/jul-aug2018digital

1 Adventure Dog

"NO"
From the album *The Dog House*
Self-Released

Funky, soulful rock-and-roll fresh out of Burlington, Vt. Adventure Dog blends soothing melodies, tight horn lines and powerful vocals to construct playful yet emotional songs that you can't help but groove out to.

facebook.com/adventuredogg

2 Captain Midnight Band

"Jennifer In My Dreams"
From the album *Freak of Nature*
Rumplevory Records

The Captain Midnight Band plays "Waterbed Rock & Roll"—a unique hybrid of jam, rock and R&B with a heavy emphasis on visuals and humor. Formed in New Orleans and currently based in Nashville, the band features a rotating cast of bad asses that help bring Midnight's fabulously freaky songbook to life.

captainmidnightband.com

3 Hunter & The Dirty Jacks

"Leave Tomorrow"
From the album *Chase the Moonlight*
Self-Released

Hunter & The Dirty Jacks are "California Crafted Rock & Roll" featuring frontman Hunter Ackerman, guitar players Carmelo Bonaventura and Jon Siembieda, bassist Aaron Barnes and drummer Brian Lara. The album *Chase the Moonlight* features seven new songs that span rock-and-roll, blues, country, folk and psychedelic Americana.

hunterandthedirtyjacks.com

4 Chestnut Grove

"Sugamilk"
From the album *Black Champagne*
MAD Dragon Records

Chestnut Grove's EP *Black Champagne* is a raw take on high-energy rock-and-roll. The fuzzy guitar solos and aggressive vocal approach are a bit different than the band's 2017 release *Let It Down*, which displayed more of an Americana vibe. Black Champagne is now available everywhere.

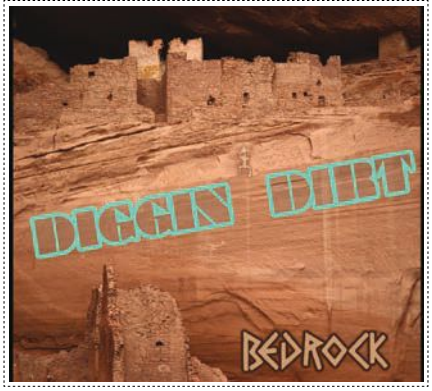
chestnutgrovemusic.com

5 Diggin' Dirt

"Funk Train"
From the EP *Bedrock*
Self-Released

Diggin' Dirt hails from Humboldt County, along the Redwood Coast of Northern California. Formed in 2011, the band's sound is a colorful mix of funk, reggae, soul and roots rock. The eight-piece funk powerhouse, led by soulful vocals, delivers timeless, infectious grooves and psychedelic jams.

diggindirtband.com



6 The Jive Tribe

"Singing My Blues Away"
Single
Self-Released

The Jive Tribe, inspired by a wide variety of artists and genres, has crafted a sound, style and vibe that is taking the scene by storm. The Colorado band's unique take on funk, soul, psychedelic rock and blues leads to the creation of a sound entirely its own.

thejivetribeband.com

7 Neon Swing X-perience

"The News"
From the album *We've Only Just Begun*
Self-Released

Neon Swing X-perience has been described as "retro-inspired, horn-infused party music," "the only band bold enough to jump, jive and rock," and "swing with sting." The purpose of NSX is simple: to get people from all walks of life to come together and dance their butts off!

neonswing.com

8 The Gentlemen's Anti-Temperance League

"Blame It All On Puerto Rico"
From the album *Prohibition Swing*
Self-Released

The Gentlemen's Anti-Temperance League is a melting pot of hot jazz, swing, and latin rhythms, brought to a boil by soaring vocals and endless energy. It's Prohibition Swing: infectious rhythms and sizzling melodies held together by modern songwriting and progressive philosophies. Perfect music for thinking, drinking, and dancing.

thegatl.com

9 Johnny Hart and the Mess

"I'm Gone"
From the album *Something Like This*
Self-Released

Johnny Hart and the Mess celebrate the history of rock-and-roll with a modern twist. Their riff-driven sound and powerful vocals carry on the tradition of their biggest influences, while paving the way for a new form of rock-and-roll in the modern era.

johnnyhartandthemess.com

10 Paragon Cause

"Consequence"
From the album *EscaPe*
Self-Released

Paragon Cause is a production and musical duo from Canada's capital, Ottawa. Dutch Orange and Cape Breton Green combine to bring their love of hip-hop, jazz, '80s synthesizers and '50s guitars to create music that is mysterious. Flowing vocals and dense harmonies mix with modal guitar playing set to retro drums.

paragoncause.com

ARTHUR BUCK

Arthur Buck BY DEAN BUDNICK

ARTHUR BUCK, THE new project and self-titled album featuring Joseph Arthur and Peter Buck, is a product of serendipity, pure and simple.

The two have known each other for a few decades. Arthur opened a number of gigs back in Buck's R.E.M. days, and Buck subsequently joined Arthur onstage on occasion. However, they had never contemplated initiating any formal collaborative project until they crossed paths in Todos Santos, Mexico.

"I just went to Mexico to go get my Dobro," Arthur explains, "and Peter happened to be there at Todos Santos, which is where he and [his wife] Chloe, have done this music festival for like five, six years. I've participated in it, I think, every year but one. I left my Dobro down there a year earlier and it was a real nice one. I was in California, and tickets to Todos Santos weren't that much, so I thought, 'You know what? I'm just gonna roll to Mexico and grab my Dobro and hang out for like a week.' I didn't even know Peter was gonna be down there, but I have another friend in New York who was like, 'Oh, Peter and Chloe are headed down there.'"

"I invited him to come swimming," Buck recalls, "He showed up and said, 'You know, man, I'm living way out in the country and there's weird noises and bugs and stuff.' So he joined us. The original theory was that I was going to play acoustic guitar on his solo record. We worked on a few things and then songs started popping up. I'd play a chord sequence and he'd like it, and I'd play another chord sequence and it'd be part of a melody. At that point, I had no idea what was going to be done with it. There was no planning whatsoever."

"We had like five songs," Arthur adds. "Then, I had an art exhibit in LA, and Peter and Chloe were driving back from Todos Santos to Portland, [Ore.]. So they stopped in LA and we did a show. I followed them to Portland, we recorded and I took it home to finish in Brooklyn.

"Tchad Blake mixed it and he's really good with things that are quirky. It didn't fit squarely into any one thing. There are lots of drum-machine beats and beat-oriented stuff and, yet, it's sort of an indie-rock-and-roll type of vibe and sort of funky too. It blends into lots of different places, and that's where Tchad thrives and excels."

The pair will support the record with a series of tour dates in September.

I AM THE MOMENT

BUCK: We were doing a show in Los Angeles and I showed up while Joe was out having dinner or something. He left his Dobro and it was capoed on the fifth fret. I never use capos, I just play what I play, but I didn't want to change his guitar settings, so I just started playing this thing, capoed on the fifth fret. I had a structure—a little bit of a melody, the bridge, an intro and all that stuff. I played it for him when he came back and he said, "I've got this thing in my notebook, 'I Am the Moment.'" I added the "waiting for you" part and we went back and forth. He wrote all the words and I helped a little bit with the melody. We did that for about half an hour and I said, "Well, OK, this show starts in about an hour, so let's write all these words down and play it tonight." He said, "Tonight?" But we did, and we actually played it twice because it was fun and we took it someplace different.

ARE YOU ELECTRIFIED?

BUCK: The title is obviously a little tip of the hat to *Are You Experienced?* But it's more about some life-changing things that Joe and, maybe to a degree, I have been going through. It was originally a bit on the psychedelic side and then it got funkier as we went on, adding the drum machines and the bass and, eventually, live drums. A lot of the stuff Joe did to finish the record were things I might not have imagined going on, and it was a surprise to hear it.

THE WANDERER

ARTHUR: This was one of the first songs we wrote together. I remember enjoying the fact that I could just concentrate on singing, concentrate on the

Continued on page 79

BROTHERS OSBORNE

By RYAN REED

ARE BROTHERS OSBORNE really a "country" band? They certainly fit the mold, at least on paper. Guitarist John is known to rock a Fender Telecaster and a cowboy hat; singer T.J. croons in a velvety baritone with a slight drawl; and their plainspoken yet deceptively clever lyrics often explore signature country subjects like hangovers of the head and the heart. But no amount of CMA awards can obscure the truth: Like their kindred spirits Eric Church and Sturgill Simpson, these dudes are too crafty and too sonically adventurous to fit neatly in the genre's generic confines.

"My brother and I grew up listening to everything," John recalls of their childhood in the small town of Deale, Md. "We would listen to our dad's book of 200 CDs—the ones where you would turn the pages. There was everything from classic country to old blues, Prince, Bonnie Raitt, old rock records like Skynyrd and ZZ Top—he even had Mariah Carey in there. He listened to everything. When we make music, we're pulling from such a wide range of influences from over the years. Country has taken on a classic-rock vibe lately, but rock-and-roll is an approach and philosophy more than a sound."

John moved to country capital Nashville in 2002, and the younger T.J. followed two years later. They hustled their way into whatever gigs they could grab: John worked as a studio guitarist and performed with his own band, KingBilly, and T.J. played as a solo artist. Their career shifted into a new gear after they joined forces, though they were patient about landing their breakout hit. In a market saturated with clichéd fads like the "bro-country" movement, in which songs often sound more like Budweiser jingles, the siblings were determined to keep their integrity.

"There's a style of songwriting now, where it's like people are trying to do the country singer-songwriter checklist," John says. T.J. agrees. "There's an interesting thing where it's like trying to tell someone that you're country," he says. "If you're so country, then why do you have to tell anyone? They should just know." T.J. adds that he's confident that their years in Nashville have, ironically, helped them avoid those creative traps.

"We've been in Nashville for a long time, and we've gotten to see a lot of the trends that have come and gone," he says. "Early on, I was so eager to get my first break. Not that I would have done anything to have success, but I certainly would have compromised. Being here for a long time and getting seasoned in the music scene, you realize it's not worth sabotaging all the groundwork we've laid in order to have some splash. Some people have been like, 'This song is a hit, and if it's a hit, we've gotta record it.' I gotta be honest: John and I have written a lot of songs that we confidently felt would be huge hits on radio, but we didn't record them because we knew it was the opposite of what we were ultimately trying to do. Time will tell, but I want *Port Saint Joe* [their second LP] to be one of those records that someone plays 20 years from now."

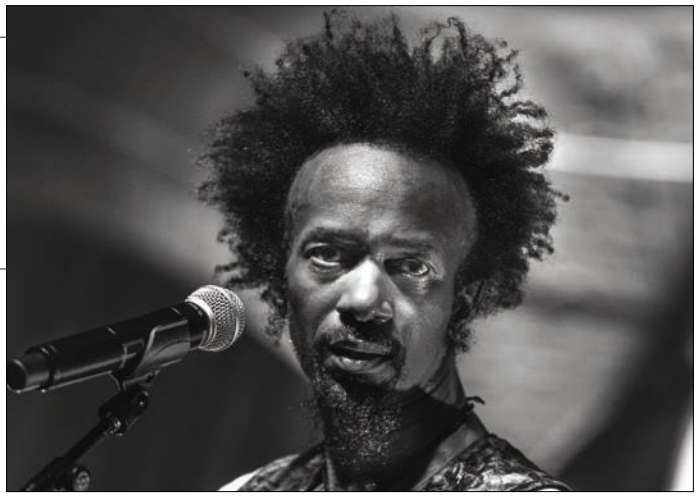
Alysse Gafkjen

To accomplish that lofty task, the pair decamped in the album's titular Florida beach town for two weeks of sessions with producer/collaborator Jay Joyce. Their approach was two-fold: maintain a raw, unpolished edge while allowing themselves to experiment. The result is a joyride from swampy blues-funk ("Shoot Me Straight") to vintage soul ("Slow Your Roll") to folky balladry ("While You Still Can"), all unified by their keen storytelling and dazzling, unpredictable arrangements. "Weed, Whiskey and Willie" nestles into a sumptuous shuffle drum groove; "Drank Like Hank" morphs midway through into a deep-fried half-time break with full-blown slap-bass. These are the sort of colorful, eyebrow-raising details you rarely hear in modern rock, let alone modern country.

"We live in an interesting time because the lines between genres are fading," John says, reflecting on their own tough-to-pigeonhole style. "We were very genre-centric people for a long time because that's how we found music. If you went to a music store, you had a brand of music you listened to, so you'd go to the rock section or the country section or the hip-hop section. Now, you have access to so much music at your fingertips that you just start scrolling and you end up going down these rabbit holes—you start with Brothers Osborne, but then you end up with a Delta Spirit record, then a David Bowie record, then an Allison Krauss & Union Station album. It's easier to have that sonic journey now."

FANTASTIC NEGRITO

By BILL MURPHY



IT IS NO SECRET THAT America is in the middle of a cultural upheaval—and when that happens, artists tend to be among the first to give the clash of attitudes a provocative voice. Just scroll back through Beyoncé's career-defining statement at Coachella, or even more recently, Childish Gambino's sticky, complex video for "This Is America," which rolls up the ugly legacies of slavery, police brutality, mass shootings and mass incarceration into a tightly choreographed tableau of protest.

Xavier Dphrepaulezz (that's "dee-FREP-ah-lez") is intimately familiar with the stance. The son of a Somali-Carribean immigrant, he grew up in Massachusetts before moving to Oakland at age 12. Almost immediately, he left home for the hard-knock life of the streets, ending up in foster care with a strict but loving Christian family, while he obsessed over hip-hop and taught himself piano by posing as a UC Berkeley student so he could sneak into the campus practice rooms.

"I'm willing to be all kinds of people and take all kinds of chances," Dphrepaulezz says from his farm—a small plot of land in Oakland, Calif., where he raises chickens, grows various crops (including cannabis), and welcomes friends and their families on weekends to till the soil. "But one of the beautiful things about being a middle-aged guy just breaking as a musician is you get to do what you want. I don't want to be famous with the big pop record so, as a producer, when I go into the studio, I try to separate myself. Some people call it a personality disorder, but I wanted the artist Fantastic Negrito to do something else. I wanted him to say something else."

He's referring to his latest album *Please Don't Be Dead*, recorded under the name he gave himself a few years ago, when he reemerged from a long hiatus away from music. The quick and brutal history: Back in the early '90s, after learning to play every instrument he could find, a near-death mugging prompted Dphrepaulezz to move to LA, where he tracked his first demo. By 1994, he signed to Interscope as Xavier and, a few years later, he released *The X Factor*, a Prince-influenced slab of earnestly futuristic R&B that sank like a stone. Then in 2000, a car crash put him in a coma for three weeks, disfiguring his guitar-playing hand and breaking much of his body, which set him on the long, hard road of physical therapy and recovery.

Please Don't Be Dead is the follow-up to 2016's *The Last Days of Oakland*, the first album that Dphrepaulezz recorded after the accident, and a critical success that scored him the Grammy for Best Contemporary Blues Album. Along the way, he won the 2015 NPR Music Tiny Desk Concert Contest and his viral street-busking videos piqued the interest of the late Soundgarden frontman Chris Cornell, who brought Fantastic Negrito on board as the opening act for his 2016 Higher Truth tour. "At that point, I started nicknaming him Christmas Cornell," Dphrepaulezz says reverently, "because man, every time the guy called me, it was really good news. He was just an incredible human being."

Gratitude, respect, hope and an unwavering idealism fuel the music on *Please Don't Be Dead*—a rootsy and resplendent garden of blues, rock, funk, hip-hop and even East African influences that draws most of its narrative weight from the American dream-turned-nightmare. On the uncanny "Plastic Hamburgers," Dphrepaulezz sounds inhabited by a young Robert Plant, belting out lyrics like, "Automatic weapon in a twitching hand/ the 50-foot wall of addiction man" with a fervor that matches the "Helter Skelter"-meets-"American Woman" sonic rage laid down by his longtime backing band. It's just the opening salvo on an album that soars and dips with moments of bluesy menace ("Bad Guy Necessity"), righteously chilling shamanism ("A Boy Named Andrew"), soulful transcendence ("Never Give Up") and funky, uplifting humor ("Bullshit Anthem"). No matter what style he's exploring, there's always a nod to the Delta masters—like Son House, Robert Johnson, Skip James, R.L. Burnside—who inspired Dphrepaulezz when he came back to music making.

"Everything comes from the blues in this country," he says. "I really fell in love with music again when I was listening to all these amazing musicians because it was so punk rock, in a way. It was so revolutionary and American. Here these guys were, the whole world is stepping on your neck and telling you you're not even a human being. You're not even a *man*. Well, hell, go sit down with a guitar and become a genius. That's American, you know what I mean? It's like, 'We got this, motherfucker.'"

He's quick to point out that there's something in the music for everyone, which is why he finds strength in the "power of the riff. That's universal. It's the chant, the thing that grabs us and unites all of us. We gotta do the music that unites us, no matter what side of the spectrum we're on. Let's bring back the middle ground—and real courtesy—and sit down together although we disagree."

From the biting lilt of "Transgender Biscuits" (with the incomparable Joi Gilliam on backing vocals) to the haunting ode "A Cold November Street," Dphrepaulezz has tapped into an American zeitgeist that's still evolving. Even as his own music has undergone a transformation toward an expansive sound that's grittier, funkier and even a bit nastier, it is more imbued with positive energy than ever before. It's also an ethos that defines the Blackball Universe, the artist collective, gallery and recording studio he co-founded with television writer Malcolm Spellman on Madison Street in Oakland's Jack London district. "We will be moving," he reveals, "because we're from Oakland, and all artists—even if you're a Grammy-winning artist—get evicted! But I'm very optimistic. I'm a guy with a hand that should never have played an instrument again, but here I am. I just believe whatever happens, we can see the good in it if we want. And that's why I love the idea: 'Take the bullshit and turn it into good shit.' It started as a chant I would do at concerts, and it turned into a song. That's how it is, man. Things change, and there's nothing we can do but adapt."

Alberto Bravo

Remembering B.B. King's

By DINO PERRUCCI

B.B. King Blues Club & Grill opened in New York's Times Square back in 2000, and I had the honor of serving as their house photographer from 2001 to until their recent closing on April 29. During those 17 years, I spent time with some of the greatest names in music history. It is impossible to list them all, but among the most memorable performers were: B.B. King, James Brown, Bo Diddley, Aretha Franklin, Little Richard, Jerry Lee Lewis, Hubert Sumlin, The Neville Brothers, Johnny Winter, Buddy Guy and Doc Watson.

Here are a few of my favorite moments:

6/19/04:

A young John Mayer joins B.B. King onstage. While I was trying to be a fly on the wall, a fan yelled at them to "look over here," and I got this photo. John has it hanging in his parents' house.

2/7/07:

Bo Diddley performed at B.B.'s a number of times before his passing in 2008. I remember him as a very kind person who somehow seemed a bit underrated, considering his contributions to music. The man invented his own beat!

8/5/05:

Ivan Neville and Trey Anastasio hanging out backstage at a Dumpstaphunk show at B.B.'s. I'm really going to miss that green room.

6/8/06:

James Brown played many shows at B.B.'s, including several memorable New Year's Eve shows. The Godfather of Soul's shows were some of the most packed and sweaty that I have ever seen at B.B. King's.

1/10/08:

B.B.'s hosted several benefits for Hubert Sumlin who was, of course, best known as Howlin' Wolf's guitar player and had a huge influence on many performers. He played on this night—which was billed as a birthday celebration for Jimmy Vivino—and I caught this special moment between Warren Haynes and Levon Helm backstage. A large copy of this photo hangs in Levon's barn to this day.

6/16/06: *Instead of touring with a band, Chuck Berry would notoriously pick up local musicians wherever he was playing. His theory was that every musician should know his music. On this night, John Gros was in town for a late-night Papa Grows Funk show (also at B.B.'s), and was part of the backing band. John and I still talk about this special night.*

6/7/04:

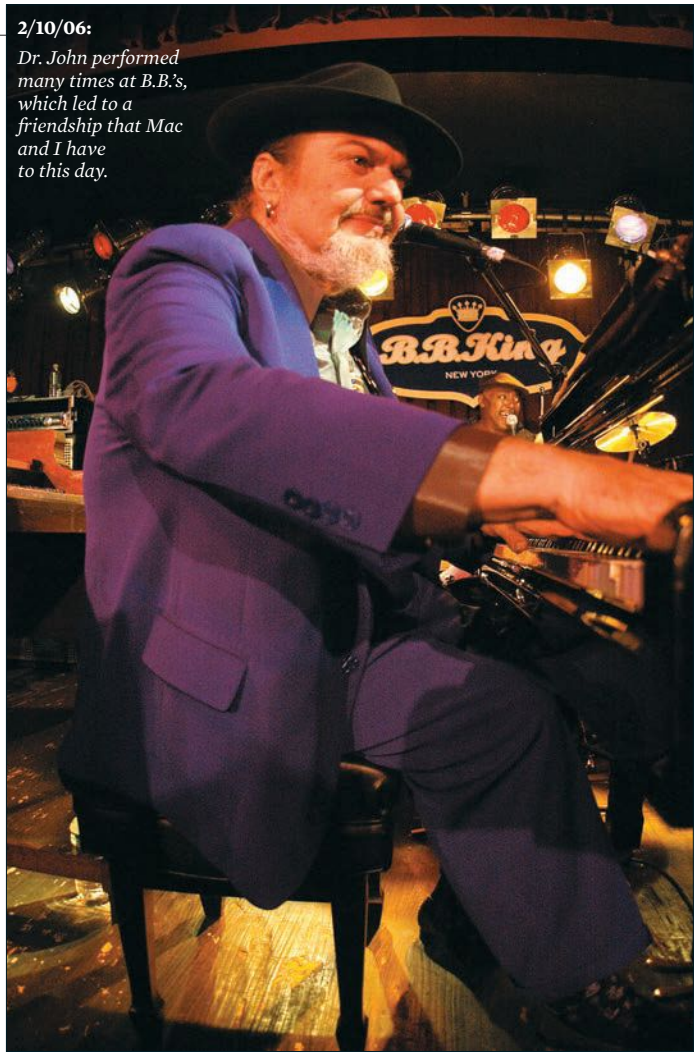
This photo of Marco Benevento, Mike Gordon and Joe Russo is from an early HeadCount benefit in 2004—and it was also the first time that Mike played bass with The Duo. Where has the time gone?

1/17/11:

B.B.'s also played host to several shows from the Rock and Roll Fantasy Camp. Roger Daltrey joined us in 2011 in the most intimate setting I've ever seen him in.

2/10/06:

Dr. John performed many times at B.B.'s, which led to a friendship that Mac and I have to this day.



10/24/06:

Method Man backstage at B.B. King's at the High Times Stony Awards—things got a little hazy.

4/18/18:

This photo is from the final night I photographed Buddy Guy at B.B.'s. After 25-30 previous shows, I knew where to wait for him at the bar.

5 ARTISTS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT

LUCY DACUS RICHMOND, VA.

Moments in a Box

At just 23, **Lucy Dacus** is well beyond her years. One listen to her sophomore record *Historian* and you'll know. The album is a deep meditation on loss and redemption, filled with stories from Dacus' past and surrounded by crunchy guitars and distortion, a la PJ Harvey and the Pixies.

"A lot of the songs revert back to very specific moments, but I didn't write [them] in the moment," she says. "They just came out over time the way that they did. There wasn't this immediate translation from life to song." Dacus grew up in Richmond, Va., surrounding herself with music her whole life. She started singing early on as a child, graduating to church choir soon after. In middle school, she bought a guitar and started learning chords and, in high school, she finally took the plunge and started writing her own music. After high school, she got the courage to start playing live in front of people. Her first album, 2016's *No Burden*, was recorded super lo-fi—no recording budget, no expectations, no fans to consider. She issued it via Richmond upstart label EggHunt Records and it gained the attention of Matador Records, who rereleased it, propping her up onto an international stage just like that.

When it came time to write *Historian*, a newfound pressure existed, and she says that an ever-present feeling loomed throughout the recording process. "There's a responsibility now," she says. "I don't take it lightly. It's not necessarily stressful, but it is a weight." Dacus' extreme confessions on songs like "Night Shift," "Body to Flame" and "Pillar of Truth" are *Historian* album highlights, but it's clear that the whole thing has an emotional heft to it that you don't hear often with early twentysomethings. "It's really normal to be anxious," she says. "There are these immediate pressures—politically, culturally, and within my family or friend groups—[and] there seems to be a lot of confusion in my life. That comes through on the album as me trying to maintain hope throughout those things. I would feel like a failure if that didn't come through."

lucydacus.com ***Mike Ayers***

SUN JUNE AUSTIN, TEXAS

Inspired Adulting

Sun June has finally grown up. When founders and primary songwriters **Laura Colwell** and **Stephen Salisbury** first met, they were working in Terrence Malick's editing office and began taking advantage of their boss' absences to use the space as a practice studio. "The hours were really long," says the duo of their former jobs. "Our first collaboration was an office goof, where we rewrote the Pixies' 'Where Is My Mind?' as 'Where Is My Life?' Management was not impressed." At the time, they were going by the name JEFF and writing songs that they describe as "cute" or "fun," rather than an embodiment of the unpolished and emotionally vulnerable vibe that they aspired to.

That was back in 2014. But over the course of the next two years, the informal side project grew into a quintet featuring multi-instrumentalists **Michael Bain**, **Justin Harris** and **Sarah Schultz**. By fall of 2016, they'd written and demoed 10 songs for their first album, the recently released *Years*, and this year, they performed for the first time at SXSW.

With a full-length LP in the works, the band had long stopped being a joke, so a rebrand was in order. "It took us a long time to take ourselves seriously," says Colwell, explaining that, as a group, they needed to go through a certain maturation process to gain credibility. "[Changing our name to] Sun June instead of JEFF was the first step. We imagined our music could grow and evolve better under the new name."

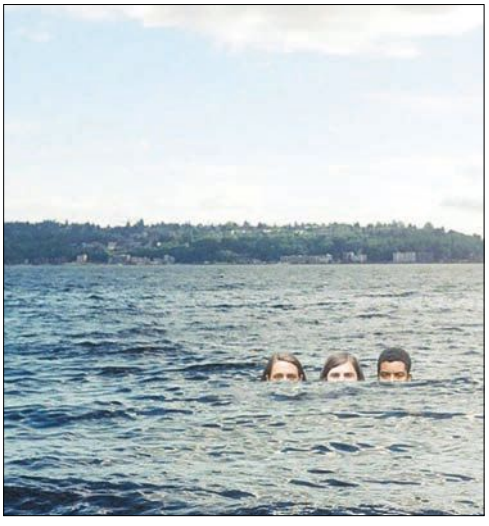
Years—which debuted in June on Keeled Scales—has a mix of warm, poppy, coffee-shop-ready tunes, like its first single "Young," and ethereal songs ("Discotheque") reminiscent of Zero 7's ubiquitous 2001 track "In the Waiting Line."

"Vocally, I can say I decided to allow myself to not always try and sound 'pretty' and to go for uncomfortable ranges," says Colwell. "The songs on the album vary in range for me, and that was something I always was scared of. But sometimes, that's exactly what a song needs." She continues, "We want to gravitate toward the things that are harder for us to do, and we always want to say, 'This could be better.' At the same time, we want to be more comfortable sharing where we are."

sunjunemusic.com ***Sonia Weiser***

THE LONELY BISCUITS NASHVILLE, TENN.

Unpretentious Playfulness



Most of us have embarrassed ourselves at some point during our teenage years. Few of us have propelled that embarrassment into a legitimate music career. **The Lonely Biscuits** owe everything to their 2011 breakout single, "Butter," a laid-back fusion of hip-hop rhymes and rock-soul crooning—one of several silly larks they recorded as students at Nashville's Belmont University. "We were being weird college kids," says frontman **Grady Wenrich**, reflecting on their early material. "It's like watching a video of yourself being an idiot in high school—only everyone's seen it, and they think that's who you really are. And it's like 15 videos of you saying stuff you don't really believe in." At the time, the band's G. Love-style jams were just a way to unwind after class. But their breezy vibe caught on with the college crowd, thanks to exposure from a handful of blogs dedicated to slacker rap-rock—frequented by a demographic that Wenrich dubs the "millennial on-your-phone" scene.

"By spring of that freshman year, we were flying to play college festivals and frat shows because we'd gotten such a big fanbase," he says. Now, with graduation a few years in the rear view, The Lonely Biscuits are working hard to shed their old skin, pivoting into a mature, sweet-natured brand of indie-rock. With their debut LP, *The Universe in You*, the trio have completed that evolution. Hooky sing-alongs like "Blue Glass" and "Afterglow," both produced by Cage the Elephant guitarist Nick Bockrath, epitomize the band's current headspace. "I went back to the stuff I grew up with—'90s rock and classic rock," Wenrich says. It's safe to say the band's rapping days are over, but they haven't lost their unpretentious playfulness: "I think we're just pretty lighthearted, goofy people." ***Ryan Reed***

DONOVAN WOODS TORONTO

Gray Matters

Donovan Woods has settled on a self-effacing way to describe his music: "Canada's answer to Paul Simon, except taller and not as good." While the Toronto-based singer's fifth record, *Both Ways* clearly owes a good bit to Rhymin' Simon, his new release also bounces between some authentic Music City twang—nodding to his part-time status as a Nashville resident and co-writer for Tim McGraw ("Portland, Maine") and Charles Kelley of Lady Antebellum ("Leaving Nashville")—and modern-folk melodics that pair well with his gravelly vocals and flair for vivid, real-life imagery. Woods hired his first-ever full studio band for the *Both Ways* sessions, adding to a heavier alternative sound that sets the record apart from his earlier, acoustic-based records.

"I have a hard time distilling something down to simplicity, which is what a really good song does," he explains. "It takes something really complicated and nuanced and distills it into something simple and elegant." Songs such as "Good Lover," "Our Friend Bobby" and "Burn That Bridge" are prime examples of his varied influences, which range from literature and poetry to Bruce Springsteen and the rhythmic '90s hip-hop that he grew up with while listening to the Detroit radio stations about 60 miles away from his hometown of Sarnia. "I love language in a big way, so anything that's sort of skimpy I love to hear and can write off of it pretty easily," he says, citing novelist Maile Meloy's *Both Ways Is the Only Way I Want It* for the album's title. "When lyrics start to straddle that gray area and start to show that the world is full of things that are bad and good at the same time, that's when lyrics start to sound like real life." donovanwoods.net ***Gabby Strang***

Danielle Holbert (Woods)

JOEY DOSIK LOS ANGELES

Guided by (Soulful) Voices

Joey Dosik had his first brush with fame during a show-stealing performance of Little Richard's "Tutti Frutti" during a third-grade talent show and, 25 years later, he's still hooked on classic soul. The Los Angeles singer-songwriter—who is best known for his association with theatrical festival-scene favorites Vulfpeck—is slated to release his debut LP *Inside Voice* in August, a collection of subtly funky doo-wop and silk-smooth piano soul, woven together by his warm, timeless vocals.

"There's something about soul that speaks to children—it's sweet and fun—songs where everyone can sing together," he says from LA, hours before taking off for a European tour. "I'm just a white, Jewish kid from the Valley, but I spent more time connecting with Marvin Gaye than anything else."

Dosik began working on *Inside Voice* back in 2013, but he was sidelined from the studio by a knee injury in a game of pick-up basketball. While sequestered at home, Dosik self-released 2016's *Game Winner*, a bedroom recording project that he describes as "this weird basketball music-as-therapy concept EP" and, when he got back on his feet, he hit the road with funk act Vulfpeck, adding keys and saxophone to their potent grooves. And then, slowly, he returned to the studio to wrap up his LP.

Though the record's swooning, intimate sound is consistent, Dosik calls *Inside Voice* "an amalgamation of different scenes in LA." The sessions drew in an eclectic mix of collaborators, too: Vulfpeck's Jack Stratton and Theo Katzman both lent their services, Moses Sumney and Nia Andrews added backup vocals and Feist collaborator and musical polyglot Mocky served as a co-producer.

The resulting LP owes as much to 2010s Los Angeles as it does to 1960's Detroit, and listeners wouldn't blink if cuts like the breezy "In Heaven" or string-laden "Don't Want It to Be Over" were wedged in a playlist between The Temptations and Martha Reeves & The Vandellas. Dosik embraces the comparisons. "I look to those people for examples," he says. "They're my spirit guides." joeydosik.com ***Justin Jacobs***

KATIE TOUPIN

Army of One

THESE DAYS, THE mere mention of Katie Toupin's name comes with a preface: formerly of Houndmouth. The phrase is even included in her Twitter bio.

"I can't really talk about it, if that says anything," Toupin says as she looks ahead to the next stage of her career. "It was very clear that it was time for me to leave, and I left. That's all there is to it."

Her continued association with her former band is understandable. Toupin co-founded the Indiana-bred alternative-blues band in 2011 and spent five years singing and playing keyboards with the outfit as they steadily rose from Midwest clubs to the country's biggest festivals as well as national TV appearances on *The Late Show with David Letterman* and *Conan*.

When she parted ways with Houndmouth in 2016, Toupin headed west toward Los Angeles. She admits that Louisville, Ky., no longer felt like home after so many years on the road and, after settling in Southern California, she started cultivating a mix of players to hothouse her budding repertoire, sharing demos through iPhone's Voice Memos app. And, on hiatus from the perpetual party of touring, she decided to clean up her act.

"My dreams weren't going to come true if I kept living that way," the now 11-months-sober Toupin says.

However, her creative itch remained and, last year, Toupin filmed a recording session which she intended to post on YouTube. Without overdubs or edits, she recorded five songs at West LA's Village Studios during a single block of time.

While each cut possessed its own unique vibe, Toupin believed that the performances were worthy of being heard as a cohesive, stand-alone collection.

She shifted the video concept and self-released the fistful of tracks in early 2018 as a debut solo EP, *Moroccan Ballroom*. "It felt like the right first step," she says. As her confidence grew, she started scheduling a short slate of appearances in major cities, assembled a quartet to support her, and went back on the road.

Toupin embraced the freedom of her new role. She wore what she wanted—jeans and T-shirts, mostly—and played electric guitar. She hung around after her shows, signing CDs and posters long past last call. She even ran merch giveaways on Twitter.

"The hardest part is being responsible for the music and standing behind it, 110 percent," Toupin says. "The song 'Danger' took me three years to write. I'm proud of it."

Currently, Toupin is writing toward a future LP—analyzing and refining her process. "Anytime I've tried to control the angle at which I approach a song, it doesn't really work."

She's also summoning the mettle to perform a series of truly solo gigs—just her and her guitar. "To me, that's the most terrifying thing in the world," says Toupin. "I love rock-and-roll. But it sounds really challenging to keep an audience's attention entirely alone. I need to conquer that."

If anything, then Toupin is now certain that she will always make her own music. "When you're in a band, there are a million different egos floating around," she says. "This is so fun. I will never be in a band again."

Larson Sutton

BYRON ISAACS

Eyeball to Eyeball

"LEVON WAS MY greatest mentor," bassist Byron Isaacs says of his years working with the legendary Band drummer and vocalist. "I still am learning from him. I'll remember something he said years ago, and the real meaning is only hitting me now. He had a dedication, a reverence for the music that was unparalleled by anyone else I've worked with."

Isaacs was born in Texas, but first rose to prominence as a founding member of the New York Americana outfit Ollabelle alongside Amy Helm. He also developed close ties to the Woodstock musical community, performing in Levon Helm's touring band and appearing at the drummer's famed Midnight Rambles. In the years since Helm's 2012 passing, Isaacs has applied his inventive, melodic style to The Weight Band and, more recently, to The Lumineers and Lost Leaders. Now, after so much time in the shadows, he's stepping out front with his debut solo album, *Disappearing Man*, which was released on June 12 and displays his strengths as a songwriter, vocalist and, of course, ace player.

"I chose these nine songs out of over 100 that I had written over the course of a decade," Isaacs says. "My friend [singer-songwriter] Brian Cullman pushed me to record my own material. He had been a fan and champion of Ollabelle. Before I asked any other musicians to play on it, I asked our mutual friend Hector Castillo to co-produce it with Brian. Then, I put the band together with many of my favorite musicians from other projects."

Naturally, making music under your own name is vastly different from being a band member or sideman. In crafting the album, Isaacs applied lessons learned from his other gigs. "It's a process of discovery," he says. "What came out at the end was never anything we would have conceived of at the beginning. I'm naturally drawn to that strange alchemy and so, even though a solo album is less democratic by nature than a band project, I tried to make things feel like a band in the studio by building the arrangements all together, eyeball to eyeball."

Of course, the presence of Helm—whose two Grammy-winning solo albums featured Isaacs—loomed large. One song on *Disappearing Man*, "April Snow," was written with the drummer in mind. "Even when he was frail and in terrible pain, he still kicked his band's ass, and that was a 13-piece band! I wrote 'April Snow' about the day of Levon's funeral. I was a pallbearer and, just after we laid him to rest, snow flurries started to whip up, even though it was April 27."

Jeff Tamarkin

Melinda Plant (Isaacs)

WARREN HAYNES

Gov't Mule: Jorgen Carlsson, Warren Haynes, Matt Abts, Danny Louis (l-r)

Jacob Blickenstaff

The guitarist offers an inside look at Gov't Mule's upcoming tour with The Avett Brothers and The Magpie Salute, his latest batch of ABB covers and why the *Revolution* is far from over.

By **MIKE GREENHAUS**

OPPOSITE SIDES OF THE SCENE

This summer, we are going to be part of an interesting package with The Avett Brothers and The Magpie Salute. We were looking for something fun and different to do this year, and just thought it would make for a good night of music. Each band has their own fans and is coming from their own place, which will keep the night interesting, but there is an overlap—a common ground—among all three bands in the way that we all appeal to the same type of music lovers. And there will be a number of possibilities [to collaborate].

I go pretty far back with The Avett Brothers. We're all from North Carolina, so there's that connection—a kinship based around the whole regional, Appalachian musical language. We hit it off right off the bat. We've played together a handful of times, and they have done Christmas Jam a few times. We also did a Garcia tribute together not too long ago. [Haynes performed with The Avett Brothers during Dear Jerry: Let's Play 2, a two-night Jerry Garcia celebration held in October 2016.] Initially, I was only going to join them for a few songs and then it turned into: "Why don't you just do the whole set with us?" So we had some rehearsals, did the show and that allowed us to get to know each other a little better onstage. Of course, interpreting that music is something everybody does a little bit differently, which is for the best. Jerry Garcia started out playing the banjo, and was a huge proponent of folk music and bluegrass music. And that's one of the key elements of The Avett Brothers' music as well. The Avetts and Gov't Mule each have one foot in the jamband world and one foot in another world, although we are coming from opposite sides.

The Magpie Salute and Gov't Mule did a show in Holland [in 2017] and that was an opportunity for me to see them live. I really enjoyed the set, and

Continued on page 77

ROOTS OF CREATION

The group's founding singer/guitarist offers a backstage pass to his spring tour behind *Grateful Dub.*

By **BRETT WILSON**

FROM THE SNOW SQUALL IN CHICAGO TO THE heat of Nevada, the *Grateful Dub* tour has been an adventure. Yesterday, after driving through the night, we woke up, drank our coffee and gazed at the majestic mountains of Tooele, Utah. Another drive through the night brought us to a TV studio in Las Vegas for an interview. We've got 50-plus tour dates under our belt so far this year! As we work our way toward the West Coast, the band's vibe is fresh and alive—we are definitely hitting our stride!

Even though I miss my girls dearly—my six-year-old daughter, newborn and wife—they have been holding it down behind the scenes on the home front, growing our roots and diligently making sure our fans get their vinyl on time. My family is flying out for our set at Kaya Fest this weekend, and I can't wait to see them. My band of brothers has never been more solid and I know that they always have my back. Our album, *Grateful Dub*, debuted at the top of the Billboard Reggae Album chart and we kicked off our tour at Garcia's in Port Chester, N.Y., with two sets celebrating the Dead and Bob Marley's birthday.

Other performance highlights included: Marissa Lelogeais performing "They Love Each Other" with us in New York, a solo acoustic in-studio session at *Relix* and the nights in Orlando, Fla., and Boston where we rocked so hard that we blew the sound system.

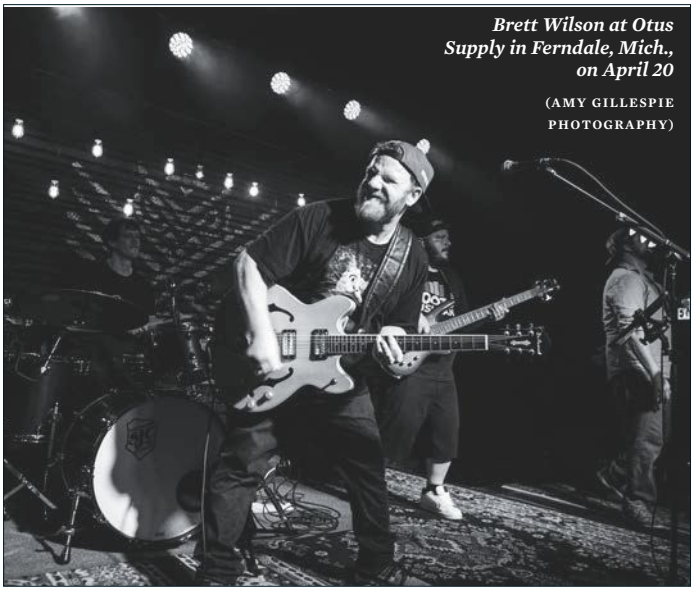
In Boston, for my birthday celebration, fans made cutouts of my head on sticks and wore them as masks on St. Paddy's Day. After a run from "Fire on the Mountain" into "Legalize It," we dropped into a sing-along version of Sublime's "Garden Grove," which morphed into "Happy Birthday" while the power was out.

Random offstage memories ranged from when a gaggle of geese—including one we named Wilbur—came into our hotel room via a sliding door in Columbus, Ohio to enjoy some late-night peanut butter crackers with us to when we drove 150-plus miles with three tires on our trailer held together by a ratchet strap, courtesy of some nice folks at a Walmart. Of course, there was also the night we did shots with ZZ Top and Bill Murray at a random bar in New York during the Love Rocks NYC! benefit after-party. Then, Ivan Neville started playing the hotel piano and the bar began to sing along to some classics, karaoke style.

We also supported the cannabis community at our New Bedford, Mass. show with one-on-one reiki sessions in the green room. I ate some homemade honey from a fan which, at the time, I believed was CBD-infused. It turned out to be THC-based, and both giggling and long guitar solos ensued.

(WILSON)

Best meal of tour so far: egg yolk ravioli with kombucha butter, shiso black winter truffles and parmesan at Otus Supply in Ferndale, Mich.
(BRETT WILSON)

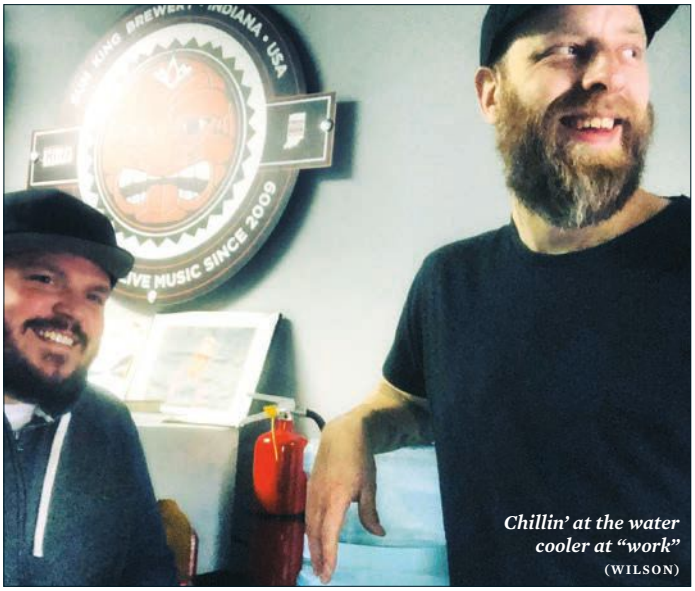


Brett Wilson at Otus Supply in Ferndale, Mich., on April 20
(AMY GILLESPIE PHOTOGRAPHY)

Brett Wilson Live at Relix on Phil Lesh's birthday
(BRIAN STOLLERY)

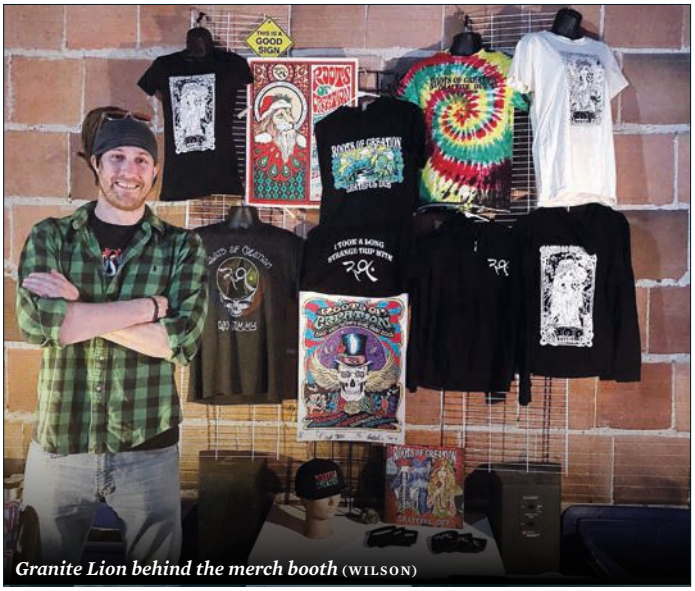
Celebrating Record Store Day by showcasing a copy of Grateful Dub on wax at a random shop in Gary, Ind. (PAUL HALEY)

My oldest daughter helping get some vinyl out to our pledgers (WILSON)



Chillin' at the water cooler at "work" (WILSON)

Sunset in Wyoming (WILSON)



Granite Lion behind the merch booth (WILSON)

When you run out of clean hats on tour at Kaya Fest (JOSH COFFMAN)

MUSIC & MORALITY FROM "DEAD MEN"

Despite the state of the world in the social media age, there is still good reason to conspire to smile.

By **REID GENAUER**

PLATO ALLEGEDLY ONCE said, "Music is a moral law. It gives a soul to the universe, wings to the mind, flight to the imagination, a charm to sadness and life to everything. It is the essence of order and leads to all that is good, just and beautiful, of which it is the invisible, but nevertheless dazzling, passionate and eternal form."

I know that's a tad on the heady side, but if you can get past the formality of the language, then the message is mind-blowing. It's as if the definition of the Grateful Dead and the jamband scene at large were written in three sentences, long before either existed.

Now here is a quote from Jerry Garcia from *Rolling Stone* in 1989: "In primitive cultures, the state of the shaman is a desirable state. In our society, we, somehow, are trying to not have that. That's a real problem. We need the visions. A lot of what we do is already metaphors for that—movies, television, all that stuff. We want to see other worlds. Music is one of the oldest versions of it." He continues, "In a sense, the Grateful Dead experience is that metaphor, too. It's like, 'Here's the ritual that we have been missing in our lives.'"

Garcia made the point about the need for shaman-like connectivity and the absence of those rituals in 1989 before the internet had taken hold. Since then, it seems as though the symptoms he pointed out have gotten markedly worse. The age-old march toward industrialization has increasingly narrowed our access to the soul of the universe and, ironically, to digital media; the most recent mile in that journey has accelerated our alienation.

To Garcia's point, we lost sight of the rituals that connect us to each other, to nature and to whatever lies beyond our cramped view of the universe long before the internet. For centuries, the cultural measure of success has bent toward quantity over quality, productivity over passion and uniformity over unity. It seems like a natural outcome that the tools for creativity, communication and community have largely been invented with the aim of uniform efficiency. They are a reflection of a culture that favors the same. Sadly, instead of being invisible, dazzling and passionate, as we believe Plato suggested, most of the technology that we use for communication is invisible, dazzling and dispassionate by design. Devoid of an emotional compass, social media is exceptionally good at what it's designed to do—convey and amplify social sentiments that already exist.

I'm Darwinian in my judgment of both culture and technology. I'm not calling for a return to the good old days—we're never going back to pay phones on the corner, browsing musty old record shops or smoking weed that doesn't get you stoned. The question is: Given the pervasiveness of the technology in our lives and the unimaginable cultural changes afoot, how do we reclaim some of the rituals that Garcia longed for? How do we reconnect with the soul of the universe that is so glaringly absent?

Ironically, one answer to that question is technology and capitalism. There is a cry for genuine connection, and someone will answer that call with new technology that delivers against the demand for emotional belonging. In the meantime, as a part of the jamband scene, we're privileged in that we already have a powerful remedy. We purposefully lean into the experience and the "dazzling passion" of music. We've been taught how to rely on the music community as a source of connectivity and music as a gateway to the universe. It's a form of horizontal spiritualism, a moral code without any judgment. There is a reason we drop everything to see 13 Phish shows at The Garden and fly to the ends of the earth to see Dead & Company at Shoreline—it makes us feel connected to something bigger, something "other." My recommendation is to do more of it.

There is no doubt that social media's reach has had unintended consequences. It's been hijacked by a humanity defined by deep cultural, political and evolutionary trends toward fear and negativity. In the social age, each of us has a voice and a responsibility to recast that trend toward possibility and to bend the collective story to positivity. No machine can replace the "soul to the universe." We tell the machines what matters to us not the other way around.

So do what you do best. Use the moral code of music to lend soul to the social sphere, participate in the issues near and dear to you with the same passion and compassion, and along the way, if you get confused, listen to the music play.

Conspire to smile, folks.

Reid Genauer is the lead singer and principal songwriter for Strangefolk and Assembly of Dust. His latest project, Conspire to Smile*, is a Kickstarter campaign and an album intended "to amplify positive sentiment on social media."*

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ZIGGY MARLEY

Three decades after emerging from his family's shadow, Bob Marley's oldest son is still leading his own, loving rebellion.

By **LARSON SUTTON**

Tim Cadiente

ZIGGY MARLEY envisions his music as an overt expression of love, despite the current political climate. In certain ways, the eight-time Grammy winner has come off as a committed community organizer, calling for action, since his hit 1988 debut *Conscious Party* launched him and his sibling-group The Melody Makers into stardom. Back then, he sang about African freedom fighters, interracial relationships and religious oppression. And now, three decades later on *Rebellion Rises*, his seventh studio set as a solo artist, he's turned his attention to chastising failed leadership, encouraging revolution and peace appeals.

In 2017, Marley co-produced a refresh of Bob Marley & The Wailers' *Exodus* to commemorate its 40th anniversary—remixing, augmenting and shifting tracks to create a unique reissue of one of his father's undisputed masterpieces—yet Marley has never been one to rest on his family's laurels. When he tours, it's for several months at a time, all over the planet. When he's home, he's creating the next album—11 records, including four live collections, in the last 15 years.

The *Exodus* project bled into *Rebellion Rises*, which Marley wrote, arranged, recorded and produced in his home studio in Los Angeles. There is a resultant urgency throughout the 10 songs, from the opening track "See Dem Fake Leaders" to the closer, "Rebellion Rises."

"Really and truly, this album is a call to action for all humanity," he says. "This is a rebellion that every human being can get behind, regardless of your race, religion or what you believe in."

The sounds that populate the record evoke all periods of Marley's three-decade development: polyrhythms, biting electric guitar, bluesy twists, heartfelt soul and Caribbean flavors that stretch beyond roots reggae. There's even a cameo by an intern, Samuill Kalonji, pulled from the hallways of Marley's Tuff Gong Worldwide record label.

"We're talking about love," he says. "If we can love each other, the better it will be for all of us."

You have resisted calling your music "political" but, at times, this album sounds that way.

To a degree, yes. But, sometimes I wonder what is political? What does it mean? I don't know. I'm not sure. I guess, yes, I'm expressing certain things that are more than just about me. There are things that are addressing what's happening in this world and in this country. I guess that

makes it a little bit political. These are serious issues.

Are you worried?
I don't know if worried is the right word. More like energized. More like, "We have to do something now." More like, "Let's go!" More like, "Where are we? Where are our voices? Where are the actions of the majority of the people on this earth who want to see this world become a better place?" I know we are here. I know we exist. It's not about specific issues or causes. I believe each different cause or issue is good enough to be raised. There is the one issue that all humanity, or at least the majority of humanity, is in agreement with, and that is the idea that we should love each other more. This is the rebellion.

How does this rebellion happen?
If we believe in love as human beings, then the political powers, the racist powers, cannot divide or brainwash us into believing in what they tell us to divide us, to hurt us, to kill each other.

The album cover depicts you holding hands with a toddler, looking out over the ocean to the horizon. Is that a way of saying this rebellion is for the future of the next generation?
Yeah, we will be just the beginning of this rebellion. It is they who will actually complete the dream that we're talking about, the vision we're talking about. It is that generation—the little naked kid you see on the cover. It's his generation that will fulfill the final stages of the rebellion. We're bringing them up. The rebellion rises and our children are a part of it.

Speaking of that next generation, your son Gideon has a vocal cameo on this album. How did that come about?
I work in the studio at my house. This is where I spent most of my time on the record. So, the kids come in and out. Gideon is a very just human being. He's always standing up for somebody. That's his personality. Sometimes it's like, "Mind your own business, man." [*Laughs*.] We were in the studio and there was a part we were working on. He was copying what I was saying. I said, "You want to be on the album?" And he said yes. We practiced [the lyrics I had written before] and did it a few times. I wanted him to really work hard. I didn't want him to just do it one time and think we are done. It was a few days until he got it satisfactorily.

It's a subtle reminder of the next wave coming.
In my imagination, if I was visualizing it, then I would say that when his voice comes in, that is like my spirit child. He's a lot like me.

The title track talks about this rebellion rising.
With that song, I thought, no, it's not "rising;" it's "rises." I want to take it to that more affirmative place. It's not coming; it's here. It's not saying it's going to happen, it's happening now. This is what I'm inspired to tell the world and how to approach the message in this record. It's not saying tomorrow will be better. It's now. I changed my words to represent the affirmative of it instead of the dream of it. The more we reinforce our ideas with the affirmative vibration, the more it makes it what it is supposed to be.

You worked on the reimagining of *Exodus* last year...
I know where you're going. I was thinking about it recently. Working on the *Exodus* tracks really helped me, especially musically, on this record. I'm a student of music. I heard things from that session. I'm listening [on *Exodus*] to some of the greatest players of music that ever played—my father and the band. Subconsciously and consciously, I'm learning. I heard the way instruments were played, and how I thought things were played were not how they were played. It was like, "Wow, OK, I feel that now." There was spirit in my father's music.

How did that influence this album?
On this album, I created most of the instrumentation. I had some other musicians come in and interpret it, copy it. I established the vibe of what the record was going to be and someone else plays it. We work together to make sure the vibe is not lost. *Exodus* was half message-oriented, but half was kind of love songs. This album has that balance, with five songs having a political edge and five that are softer around the edges.

You sing about "rebels with a cause." Is that how you see yourself?
Our cause is love, of course. Our cause has been love from ever since—from the beginning of time, from Jesus Christ, we've been talking about love. Our rebellion has been about love for one another. I'm part of that lineage of voices through time that continues to spread the rebellion of love. This is the change in the world that cannot be brought by politicians or priests or popes. It is a change that can only come from the voice of the people. And music is the main vehicle of that voice. The people rebel against the leaders—what we call fake leaders. If you're not spreading love, then you are not leading. If you are spreading war and violence and hate and divisiveness, then you are not leading.

Your brother Stephen Marley guests on "Circle of Peace." What were your intentions with that song?
There is so much demoralizing negativity everywhere I look. I really want to create a space for the other side of the equation. Who is more willing in this battle for humanity? "Circle of Peace" is about that. Only the willing will see their dreams. Who is more willing? Now is the time to show our willingness.

Who raps on "World Revolution?"
He's an intern at my office. It's funny; people say, "Why don't you get this rapper or that rapper? It would be better for the album's exposure." I said, *nah*, I like the intern. I like doing things organically, not just because.

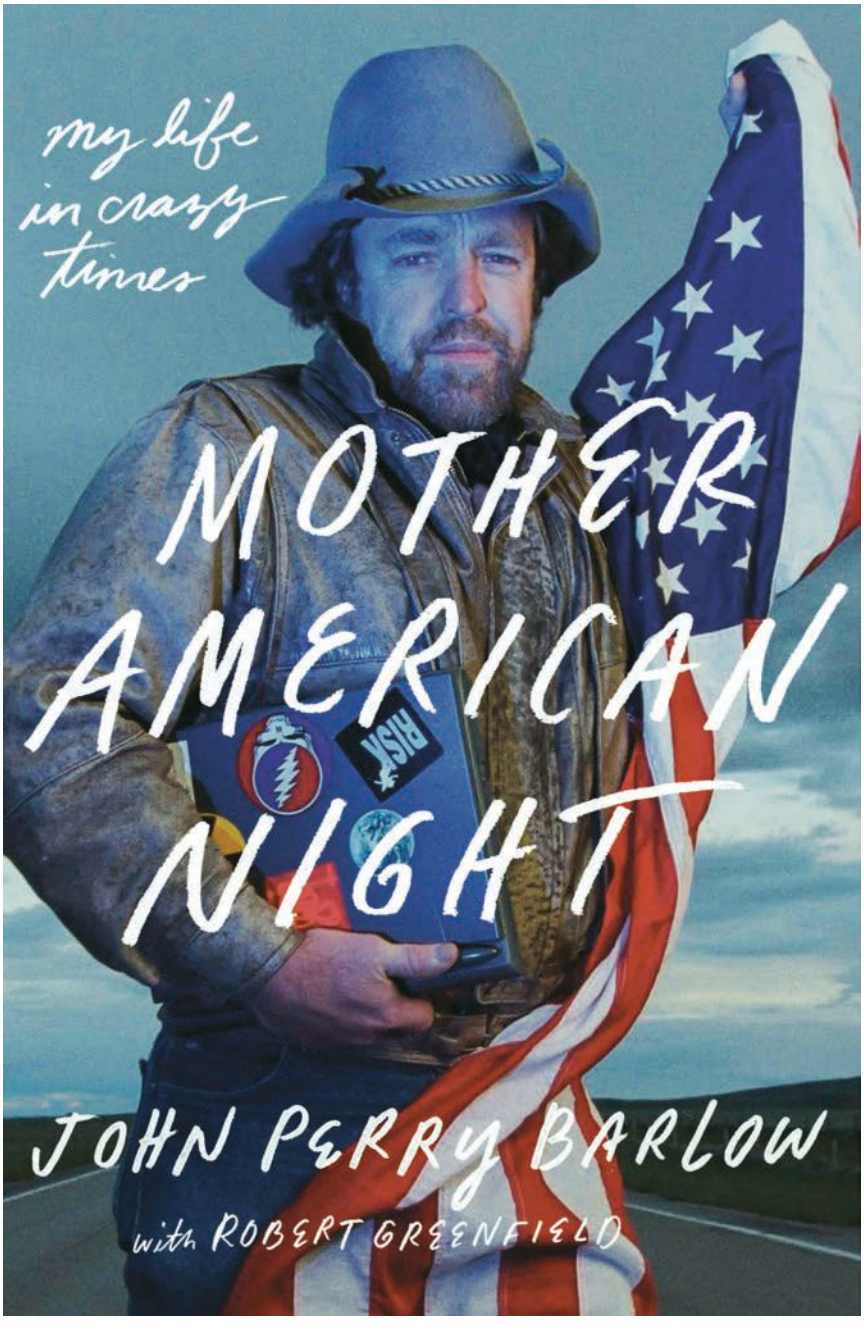
That is reflected in the lyric: "To know the truth, you've got to know the lies."
I'm a simple person. Love is the foundation of everything I speak about. Everything I relate to comes from love. That line came out of nowhere. I didn't even think about it. I didn't know what it would mean. If you don't know the lie, you're going to get tricked. How do I know this? Really, my friend, it's from my heart. It's from my true self. It's from the part of me that speaks the truth to myself. It's from the part of me that has no bias. Some people call it your consciousness. Some people call it God. No matter what lie I may try to tell myself, there is a voice that says that's wrong.

In between this studio album and the previous one, you released two live collections. Do you feel compelled to always be working on a project?
That is just how I am. If I could put out a new song every day, then I would. On this album, we have two songs that I previously released demos of. I want to give out more free music in between records—streaming or download. I never stop creating. It's not like I'm forcing it. I just let it loose and try to keep the people engaged. I don't want to disappear. I want to stay in the discussion. As my father said: "The bad guys aren't taking a day off. So, why should we take a day off?"

Looks Like Rain

In this exclusive excerpt from his new autobiography, the late John Perry Barlow revisits a memorable songwriting session with Bob Weir.

By **JOHN BARLOW WITH ROBERT GREENFIELD**



John Perry Barlow's memoir, Mother American Night: My Life in Crazy Times*, is a spirited, engaging account of a fascinating life. The book traces Barlow's journey from Wyoming to India to Haight-Ashbury to Silicon Valley, while searching for truth and beauty. Along the way, the Grateful Dead songwriter and co-founder of the Electronic Frontier Foundation shares a series of fascinating vignettes as he crosses paths with numerous fellow American iconoclasts, including: Timothy Leary, Steve Jobs, Jacqueline Kennedy Onassis and Edward Snowden.*

The following selection looks back at Barlow's collaboration with his best friend, the Grateful Dead's Bob Weir, as they create music together at Barlow's ranch in Wyoming.

In **JANUARY 1972, WEIR CAME** out to the Bar Cross so we could write songs together for his first solo album. That was when he saw the ghost.

Actually, it was his dog who first discovered the ghost. Bobby had brought with him a young malamute named Moondog who wasn't even a year old. They were both staying with me in an old homestead ranch house at the Finn place, across the ditch from the cabin where I had gone to school. Suddenly, at about three in the morning, the dog did a couple of revolutions around the kitchen and left a dog-high line of liquid shit around the full circumference of the room. The dog had been completely freaked out by something so we got up and dealt with that, got the dog situated outside and went back to sleep.

The ghost itself had deviled me ever since I had moved into the Finn place. It was the practice of this ghost to manifest itself invisibly but palpably at the end of my bed and look at me in a stark way. It seemed like a man, and I had experienced it many times while sleeping. After the first few times, I had come to the conclusion that the damn thing wasn't going to do anything but stand there and look at me.

On this night, though, Weir

Continued on page 76

CONQUERING THE MULLET

On the heels of their 30th anniversary, Leftover Salmon are still searching for *Something Higher*

By **MIKE AYERS**

DW Burnett

"Where's my cord?" asks Vince Herman.

It's about an hour until doors open at the New York City club Bowery Electric, a tiny 200-person spot in Lower Manhattan where Leftover Salmon is scheduled to play an intimate album release party. The Colorado-bred group spent the afternoon hosting a radio show on SiriusXM's Jam_ON station. 24 hours earlier, they played at a bluegrass and beer festival in Denver and 24 hours prior to that, they were on stage at a sold-out Red Rocks gig alongside Phil Lesh & The Terrapin Family Band. And, the following night, they are slated to play a happy-hour set at New York's Brooklyn Bowl, where Herman will also take party in the We B-E-E Spelling charity game show. So it would certainly make sense that this whirlwind run could yield a lost cord.

But, Herman isn't the type of guy who would let any sort of equipment mishap ruin his night—not at this point in the band's 29th year. Moments later, backstage in the green room (which is painted blood red), he digs into some chips and salsa, and reflects on the last time they played a venue this small. It reminds him of a time when they were just starting out in the early-'90s, where any bar with a sound guy would suffice. This was essentially a Downtown New York bar with a sound guy, and it would work for tonight.

"Small clusters like this in New York, you can get things done," he says, rather prophetically.

Getting things done certainly could have been Leftover Salmon's unofficial mantra for the last three decades. Herman, along with mandolin player Drew Emmitt, have managed to keep the group together, shuffling through a handful of lineup changes, a short period last decade where they were officially on hiatus, the death of their original banjo player Mark Vann, marriages, kids and now a new six-piece lineup that they both swear has brought out the best in the band, ever.

This new lineup is the impetus for tonight's tiny show—they're celebrating the release of *Something Higher*, Leftover Salmon's 11th official release. It's a remarkably polished collection, a natural mix of Americana and bluegrass that sounds like their most mature set of songs to date. It's an album they recorded in just 10 days in Tucson, Ariz. It's also an album that every member of the band contributed original songs to, and an album that saw Herman and Emmitt truly collaborate and write a song together for the first time after all these years.

"It's more of a collective now—a collaboration with everybody," Emmitt says. "This record, especially. Even the last couple of records, we were leaning toward that more and more. Twenty years ago, we would write individually and bring those songs to the band. And [our new process] definitely reflects this lineup, which is a great thing. This is the best lineup overall we've ever had. There's been some great lineups in the past, but it's all the elements we need."

Today's iteration of Leftover Salmon includes banjo player Andy Thorn, keyboardist Erik Deutsch, bassist Greg Garrison and drummer Alwyn Robinson. The musicians' backgrounds are quite varied: Thorn clocked in time with Larry Keel, Deutsch spent years playing in the jazzy combo Fat Mama and touring with Charlie Hunter, Garrison was an early member of Punch Brothers, and Robinson studied classical percussion and has been part of marching bands. Their new sound is bigger, but not out of control; they certainly know their way around the stage and studio but, most of all, they have a chemistry that any band would yearn for.

Outside the little red room, where Emmitt and Herman have shifted their pre-show eats from chips and salsa to slices of New York pizza, the rest of the band continues to soundcheck at their leisure. They don't play full songs, just a quick warm-up to make sure things are in tune and coming out right.

"We are absolutely fired up," Herman says. "It's a real blessing to Drew and I. We just feel lucky as can be."

* * *

LEFTOVER SALMON CAME together at the end of 1989 by accident—or perhaps divine intervention. Herman's band, the Salmon Heads, was scheduled to play a New Year's Eve gig in Crested Butte, Colo., but some of his bandmates couldn't make it. At the last minute, he called up Emmitt, who offered his mandolin services and some members of his own group, the Left Hand String Band. Their onstage energy was electric.

"The thing that caused the crowd to go nuts was when we would play these fast bluegrass songs," Herman recalls. "And people were slam dancing—it was like, *'whoa*!' We just bumped into it. They started doing that, and we kept giving them what they wanted."

From there, Leftover Salmon was born and immediately carved out a new sound that was lovingly described as "polyethnic Cajun slamgrass." Their shows drew jamband fans and bluegrass aficionados alike, and Leftover Salmon started touring relentlessly throughout the '90s, playing clubs, theaters and festivals.

That spirit of adventure and heading into the unknown still exists today, just in different forms. When the musicians showed up to start recording *Something Higher* in Tucson, they had only written about half of the 12 songs that would eventually end up on the album.

"I spent a couple nights in the hotel courtyard trying to craft, trying to get things done," Herman says. "When I was in school, I always did my homework at the last minute, too."

Emmitt was the same way. "One night, Greg and I went to see some music and I wrote the third verse of 'Astral Traveler' while I was at the bar that night. I grabbed a napkin and just started writing it down," he says with a smirk.

But even with those little moments of real-time improvisation, these days, the band is focused when it comes to their studio work. For the last three albums, starting with 2012's *Aquatic Hitchhiker*, they've worked with Los Lobos' Steve Berlin as their producer.

"From the beginning, it felt very different than any other record," Berlin says of *Something Higher*. "The guys were inspired. Once we got in and got rolling, everyone

Leftover Salmon celebrate Something Higher *at Colorado's eTown Hall, 5/4/18*

Alan Crandall

was ready. Those songs that showed up late—they're some of my favorites. Sometimes you just have to honor the artistic process and pray that your muse will follow you somewhere."

Something Higher, though, doesn't sound like a band that slapped a bunch of songs together last minute. It opens with the contemplative tune "Places," a composition that Emmitt and Deutsch worked up together, reflecting on life on the road. A number of the songs have an underlying theme of traveling but, at other times, today's socio-political climate is at the forefront. There's a sinister element in Herman's "House of Cards," a dark, desert-rock number that finds Herman singing "this is not normal" and "love is gonna win again." And on the bluegrass-tinged "Foreign Fields," the one song written by Robinson, the band sounds as poignant as ever.

So does the band have a new sense of maturity?

"Oh, yeah," Emmitt says.

"God, I hope not," Herman says. The two erupt in laughter.

* * *

EMMITT NEVER CONSIDERED playing in a bluegrass band to be a full-time job when he formed Leftover Salmon all those years ago.

"When we started this band, it was hard playing bluegrass for a living—very hard," he says. "There were a couple bands that were doing pretty well, like Hot Rize and New Grass Revival—but everyone else had jobs. You didn't play bluegrass year-round. People didn't hire bluegrass bands to play in clubs or theaters. So our concept was, if we get a drummer and plug in, maybe we could get more gigs."

Now, years later, Leftover Salmon has become a model for a new generation of jamgrass and improv-friendly roots acts—like Greensky Bluegrass, The Infamous Stringdusters, Yonder Mountain String Band and Railroad Earth—who followed the same formula of playing the club circuit and booking bluegrass and Americana festivals at the same time.

"I was 25 years old before I jumped off the cliff to be a musician full time," Herman admits. "I was always told: 'You can't do that for a living. You'll never do that.' But the model of a career that would be long and enduring is definitely something that the bluegrass world [supports]. I remember thinking, 'Man, if we could do this for a long time, it'd be pretty cool.'"

The band members don't live near each other anymore. Both Robinson and Deutsch are based in Brooklyn, N.Y., Thorn lives in Boulder and Garrison holds it down in Colorado, where he is a professor of music at the University of Denver.

Emmitt still lives in Crested Butte, a place he's called home for nearly 20 years. When he's not on the road, he can usually be found on the ski slopes and raising his kids. Herman lives in Ashland, Ore. and spends most of his time walking his dogs, hanging out with his wife and playing music with his two adult sons. They even have a trio going—The Herman Clan—or "THC" for short.

They still have goals as a band, too. Herman wants Leftover to book a European tour at some point soon. And their 30th anniversary is right around the corner, so plans for that are starting to marinate.

"We're going to grow our mullets back," Herman says.

"I don't know if we should announce that," Emmitt responds, causing Herman to unleash a powerful laugh.

"It took a lot of years to conquer that mullet—it really did," he says. "But things *are* cyclical."

"I've always been interested in telling good stories but, for me, that always starts with something personal," Ben Schneider says of his songwriting process.

I am the Cosmos

Lord Huron ditches the dreamy folk textures of their early records for a headphone-friendly, space-age journey that still captures a very authentic sense of American beauty. *By* **RYAN REED**

THE TITLE OF LORD HURON'S THIRD LP, *Vide Noir*, is French for "Black Void," a seemingly bleak image for an album of such immersive color. "Aimless drifting in a far-off place/ Hurtling through the vast unknown," frontman Ben Schneider sings on opener "Lost in Time and Space," his falsetto beaming down with a mystical harp glissando. It's like a movie dream sequence where the frames ripple at the edges, signaling to the audience that they've passed into a new realm.

That's an odd combination—the heavenly and the nihilistic, the cosmic and the divine. But that disorienting sensation reflects the album's core theme: confronting the unknowable mysteries of existence. "When I consider the realities of the universe, part of me starts to feel a sadness, a loss of meaning," Schneider says. "But the more you consider it, the more it starts to take on its own beauty—how enormous this universe is. Every living creature you encounter has the same sort of inner landscape that you have. It seems so vast, thinking about the conscious space in this world. It's kind of remarkable and beautiful, without having to lay on this mythology. As we move away from religious thought into the scientific age, I also feel a lamenting for the loss of that way of thinking because it is so beautiful. It's creative, really. A lot of it is artwork itself. And it can be beautiful to see people who find that

really deep meaning in it. But at the same time, it's one of those things where, once you know what you feel to be the truth, it can't be unknown, so you have to come to terms with it—and that's what staring into the void is about."

Vide Noir, like Lord Huron's past work, is a flip-book of impressionistic short stories. But these 12 trippy tunes tap into a more supernatural vibe, with references to fortune tellers (two-part epic "Ancient Names"), mythological gods ("Secret of Life") and mysterious relics ("The Balancer's Eye"), among other queries of the world's hidden secrets.

Schneider started this existential journey alone, late at night, driving around the vast expanses of LA—a city filled with people, but somehow still lonely. On many evenings, he'd take "deep dives" into new music, absorbing new sounds as he drifted aimlessly through the scenery; sometimes he'd let Henry Rollins, and his eclectic KCRW radio show, do the digging for him. Gazing out at the shifting landscapes of water and hills, he found himself in a contemplative mood—and, suddenly, melodies and rhythms and words jumped into his brain.

"It had a lot to do with the geography of LA, the landscapes out here," he says. "I've always been inspired by nature. I know it's weird to be driving around the city and be inspired by nature, but you've got the mountains in the distance, the ocean out to the west, this sprawling grid of lights and hills in the middle, and the stars up above—all of that was merging together. We think of cities as these man-made creations outside of nature, but I started thinking about them as an *extension* of nature—or *our nature* now. Seeing that grid of lights merge with the stars in the sky and getting swallowed up in the ocean at the coast, I started thinking about how there are all these incredibly rich stories and a consciousness rolling around this vast galaxy of lights throughout the city and, by extension, the cosmos. It's funny how your mind can just wander while you're driving."

After many of these spaced-out trips, Schneider had amassed enough fragments through his iPhone Voice Memos—from beatboxed grooves to ideas for general "vibes"—to start "jigsawing" songs together back at the band's studio/rehearsal space/club house, Whispering Pines. This overall process has remained unchanged, dating back to Lord Huron's debut LP, 2012's *Lonesome Dreams*. Schneider wrote and demoed the songs, before bringing in his bandmates—drummer Mark Barry, bassist Miguel Briseño and guitarist Tom Renaud—to flesh out the arrangements. That situation, which allows Schneider to function as their creative vessel, suits everyone involved: "They all trust me to have the vision in the writing, which is hugely beneficial," Schneider says. "I feel very lucky that they trust me to do that."

* * *

LORD HURON TECHNICALLY originated as the Michigan native's solo project. In 2010, years after bouncing around from the University of Michigan (where he studied visual art) to France to New York City and LA, he recorded two folky, calypso-inflected EPs and gradually built local buzz. But as his sonic ambition started to swell beyond these modest beginnings, he realized he needed to recruit his childhood friends.

Schneider, Barry and Renaud grew up in the same circle of music-obsessed kids, and they played together in a local band that morphed through ska and punk.

"[It was] the music of the times," Barry says. "We were decent. We played together all throughout high school and rehearsed in my parents' basement. But everyone went to college and did their own thing."

In 2010, Schneider played him the early Lord Huron tracks. "I was living in Nashville at the time, and I said, 'Why don't I just drive out there and we start a band?'" Barry recalls. "So I just drove out there and expected to come back to my girlfriend in Nashville, but I ended up staying in LA. I knew I needed a change. I wanted to sink into something, and it was the perfect opportunity. Ben's always been crazy talented, but I just didn't recognize it at first. I was like, 'Dang!'"

After they drafted Renaud and Briseño (whom Barry first met and collaborated with in high school into college), Lord Huron had blossomed into a more expansive ordeal than first expected. And the music followed suit, evolving from the dust-blown, Fleet Foxes-style Americana of *Lonesome Dreams* to the widescreen, slightly dreamier folk-rock of 2015's *Strange Trails*. At this point in their evolution, the progression seemed clear. As their profile grew, so did their budget—along with the grandeur of Schneider's songwriting. But no one—probably not even Lord Huron themselves, to a certain degree—could have anticipated the kaleidoscopic shift of *Vide Noir*.

Schneider still considers it a "pretty organic" transformation. "For me, it's been a mixed blessing with streaming and online music," he says. "When I was younger, exploring and discovering music was all about going to record stores and getting recommendations from the guys there. And I loved that. I loved the social aspect of it. But you were limited by your budget which—especially back then—could be very limited. But nowadays, exploring music is so much easier. It's just endless. There's really no specific genre or person I've listened to over the past few years, but just having this expansive universe of music at my fingertips had a lot to do with the variety of sound and the scope of this record. It relates to the theme of the record, too—being adrift in this endless universe, and coming to terms with your smallness. To me, that's all related to the way the record sounds, too: this vast, psychedelic and sometimes disorienting wash."

* * *

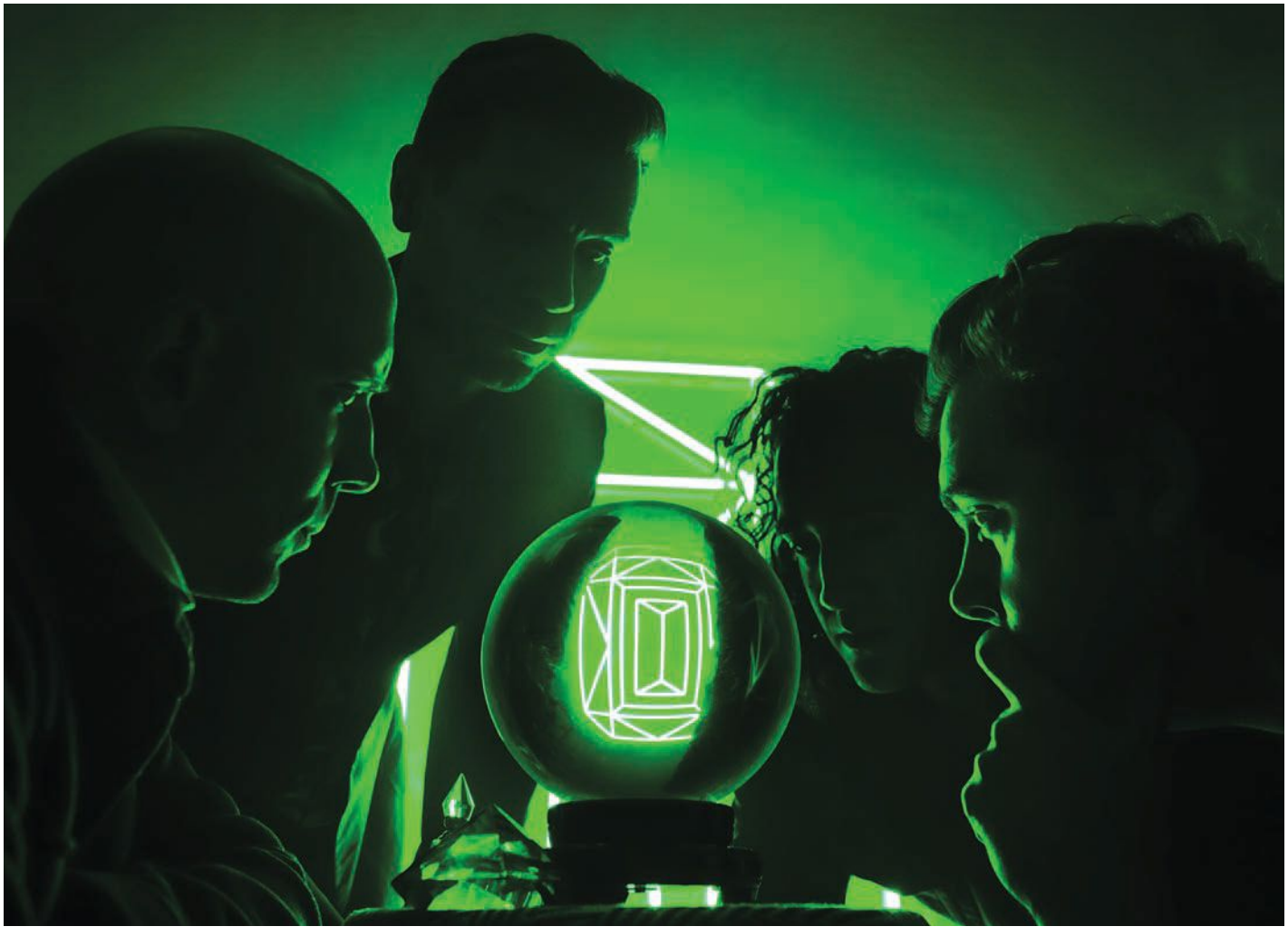
***VIDE NOIR*'S SCOPE IS JAW** dropping—from a newfound emphasis on groove to the atmospheric mixing of psych-rock legend Dave Fridmann (The Flaming Lips, MGMT) to loads of unexpected instrumentation. Barry even cites the soulful "When the Night Is Over" as their first song that "swings."

"A lot of that stuff was there from the beginning with the harps and flutes and Mellotrons because those sounds are so evocative," Schneider says. "They're such good storytellers because they come with all this evocative imagery that people associate with those sounds. I've always been interested in using shorthand with the sounds we use, whether it's a '50s rhythm or a '60s guitar sound. It's amazing how much you can communicate with just the color of a sound. People associate a certain emotion or time in their life with it. You don't know exactly what you're going to evoke, but some stuff, like the harp, has this dreamy, celestial quality.

"My wife started playing the harp," he adds. "She's a pianist, but she picked up the harp and started practicing it in our house. It's probably the most pleasant instrument to hear practiced in your home. I'd be napping and hearing these lovely glissandos and chords coming from the other room, so it was kind of in my head when I started to write. It's nice to have a community of musicians who play all these instruments so you have this grand toolbox."

Even the song structures are more experimental, like on the two-part—or, truthfully, "five-part"—epic "Ancient Names."

"I imagined it almost like you're traveling through different dimensions or places in time as it goes along, like the song is moving through dimensional portals," Schneider says. "At the beginning, you're hearing it



"We think of cities as these man-made creations outside of nature, but I started thinking about them as an *extension* of nature—or *our nature* now."
BEN SCHNEIDER

performed by some kind of fortune-teller's flutes, and then you pass through a portal to some '60s R&B backing band—it's a little late at night, and they're getting a little loopy. And then you go through some kind of cosmic electronic interlude with bells, and then you pass through one more portal into a punk club where this band is ripping through the song, and then at the very end, there is some sort of world music group. That goes with what the song is about: being trapped in this feedback loop of time and space."

But for all its stoner-friendly headphone quirks, *Vide Noir* is still rooted in human pain, loneliness and loss—the very emotions that pushed Schneider to dream up such philosophical thoughts in the first place. A good example is the pulsating rocker "Never Ever," which the frontman admits "veers into the paranormal" realm.

"I've always been interested in telling good stories but, for me, that always starts with something personal," he says. "The core of all of it—in order for it to seem authentic and for me to be able to express myself well—has to come from something that happened, whether it's to me or someone close to me. And from there, I can let it go into fiction—let it spin off into other fictional realms. Just because I think I can explore it more deeply that way, not being tied to reality necessarily. Sometimes, that's a faster way to get to the truth. I've always found that fiction can pack quite a punch, in terms of philosophical truth and bigger truths that are sometimes hard to get at through reality.

"The starting point was having a connection with somebody and feeling like it's almost too good to be true, and then it sort of ends up being too good to be true—or imaginary," he continues. "I think it's something a lot of people have gone through, in one way or another. I wanted to take that universal experience and thrust it into some sort of extreme realm—in this case, something that seems to be verging on the cosmic, supernatural. I'm a believer in science and hard facts and truth in reality but, to me, there's a real beauty to the sort of spiritual, paranormal stuff that humans invented to explain things—none of which, to be honest, I put any stock in. I'm not a religious person; in practice, I'm not a superstitious person. But there's a certain utility to that kind of way of thinking. There's so much truth in human consciousness, kind of wrapped up in myths and legends. I'm interested in trying to unpack that stuff—and maybe even create some new ones."

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Dark Star Orchestra celebrates 20 years of "celebrating the Grateful Dead experience" on November 11, 2017

Dave DeCrescente

NOT FADE AWAY

Dark Star Orchestra has long been known as one of the Grateful Dead's most faithful torchbearers and, at the height of a new improvisational renaissance, they remain a direct connection to the original Deadhead family.

By **RAFFAELA KENNY-CINCOTTA**

ROB EATON IS BURIED in spreadsheets. It's a spring afternoon and, as he does before each leg of Dark Star Orchestra's never-ending tour, the rhythm guitarist is sitting quietly in his Colorado home, sifting through setlist databases and rifling through heaps of statistics while plotting out the next round of the band's famous Grateful Dead recreations.

He chooses the setlists carefully, always aware of their placement in both the Grateful Dead catalog and the still-evolving story of Dark Star Orchestra. Then, Eaton distills the data into a 20-page booklet, which is distributed to the band and crew at the outset of every tour. The pages are filled with detailed venue notes, the evening's running order and a *Grateful Dead Almanac*'s worth of auxiliary information culled from Dark Star Orchestra's 20-plus-year touring history. It aims to minimize song repeats and assure musical diversity from tour to tour. Plus, to keep fans on their toes, Eaton tosses in occasional "elective days" where they craft original setlists.

"I have to give him kudos because it's a really difficult, arduous task that he's taken on," keyboardist Rob Barraco says of Eaton's ongoing research project. "He has a database that has every show DSO has ever played, in every single town we've ever played."

Eaton's mathematical mind and impressively trained ear are key parts of DSO's special sauce. He can narrow a Dead show down to the year, venue and, even sometimes, an exact date simply by hearing a sliver of a single show. A voracious fan of the Dead since he first heard *Europe '72* as a preteen, Eaton gained a deep knowledge of the band through his years as a taper and work restoring the old "Betty Board" reel-to-reel recordings with his friend, famed Dead archivist Dick Latvala.

And while the band's official origins date back to 1997, the current lineup is, in many ways, DSO 2.0, boasting second-generation additions like Eaton, Barraco and lead guitarist Jeff Mattson. It took time, Eaton recalls, for him to officially join the band. In the late-'90s and early aughts, he was working as a successful recording engineer, sitting in with Dark Star on occasion,

DSO at the sold-out Palace Theatre in Albany, NY, 11/11/17

Dave DeCrescente

but spending most of his time behind the boards for acts like Jimmy Buffett and Pat Metheny. Eventually, though—despite three Grammy awards on his mantle—he became restless. By 2001, he decided to "semi-retire" from the recording industry, move to Colorado and play with DSO full time.

"Change is hard and change is inconvenient, but usually change is positive—and it was for me," Eaton says. "I was working with Ricky Martin in Florida and hating every minute of it. It's just a matter of taking the step forward and not looking backward, and that's what I did. And I'm very happy with my decision and I'm very happy with living check-to-check like everybody else does. My conscious and my soul are clean."

* * *

DARK STAR ORCHESTRA'S current roster is filled with cosmic connections. Mattson, Barraco and Eaton, in particular, have deep ties and find it ironic that they now play in the same band. For years, the three musicians performed in rival Grateful Dead tribute acts on Long Island, competing for gigs and critiquing each other's approach to the music. Mattson was in a band called the Volunteers, Barraco was in a band called Timberwolf, and Eaton and bassist Skip Vangelas, who joined DSO in 2013, were in a band called Border Legion. In time, the Volunteers and Timberwolf dissolved into Wetlands regulars The Zen Tricksters and, as Mattson recalls, they ran in the same circles as Border Legion for years, oftentimes playing the same venue just days apart.

"It was interesting because we had a different approach at the time," Mattson remembers. "[Border Legion] were more refined and they probably had better vocal harmonies. We were a little rawer and more energetic, more like an early Dead approach—*savage*. We always laugh because we went to see [Border Legion] play and, in their dressing room, they were playing jazz and reading James Joyce."

In 1999, Phil Lesh asked Mattson and Barraco to perform as part of an early version of his ever-rotating Phil Lesh & Friends ensemble; Barraco ended up continuing on in Lesh's more permanent Quintet. After original keyboardist/DSO co-founder Scott Larned died unexpectedly in 2005, Barraco signed on and, despite his continued association with Lesh and his own music, has remained a vital part of the group ever since. Meanwhile, Mattson continued on with Zen Tricksters, writing original material, twisting Dead covers in new ways and even working closely with Donna Jean Godchaux. When founding Dark Star Orchestra singer/guitarist John Kadlecik left the group to join Furthur, Mattson entered the fold in 2010.

"The four guys in the front—meaning myself and Robby and Skip Vangelas and Barraco—we are all roughly the same age," Mattson explains. "We're all from that same era. We've lived through the same times, as far as the Grateful Dead goes, and we have a lot of the same values."

Like the Grateful Dead, Dark Star Orchestra relies on a kind of unspoken language; it's about anticipating what your bandmate will play before they play it. "We just have a natural musical conversation between us," Mattson continues. "We listen to each other, and I've heard from people in the audience that they can feel it too; there's this great back and forth, particularly in the jams."

"We're as good as we've ever been," Eaton adds. "I'm growing as a musician. I feel like I'm playing less, which I think is good. And there's more room. On any particular night, we're approaching it the way we're supposed to be. We're not bringing any negativity to the stage—there's no angst and it's very positive."

The members of Dark Star Orchestra are adamant that their Grateful Dead recreations aren't note-for-note. For example, during their first-ever Red Rocks show this summer, they will play the Dead's 7/8/78 show in its entirety exactly 40 years after its original date. While the songs may be the same, the solos aren't. "When we start to play a show, we approach it the same way as if we had no idea what we're gonna play," Barraco says. "And we improvise the entire thing. So, if you were to compare the two shows A-to-B, they would be so different. That's what our fans really dig. They know they can come to a show and get taken on a journey because this is a journey we're taking ourselves on."

And that style of single-minded jamming was hard fought. Like any band, it took some time for DSO to find their current level of synchronicity. Barraco recalls having to unlearn certain improv styles he picked up during his time in Lesh's steady early-'00s ensemble. While the bassist would encourage aggressive, in-your-face jamming, Dark Star Orchestra demanded a more careful ear.

"I tamed myself down and that discipline really helped me as a player to realize that when you're playing with other people, a lot of times you really have to try to fit into [the greater sound]," Barraco adds. "You can't always dominate the conversation."

Lesh, who has played with the band a number of times, reentered Dark Star Orchestra's orbit in April 2018, at Live Oak, Fla.'s Wanee Festival. DSO was headlining the event's first night, with two sets on the main stage, and Lesh's Terrapin Family Band was scheduled for the following evening. After DSO played a so-so set one ("I wasn't really thrilled," Mattson says self-deprecatingly), the band hit their stride in the second half, really pushing themselves to serve up a stellar version of "The Other One." After the show, they got word that Lesh was standing side stage for set two; during "The Other One," the Grateful Dead bassist was grinning from ear to ear. "We live for those moments where it just becomes effortless," Mattson says of that evening. "It's like a train rolling on the tracks."

* * *

IF DARK STAR ORCHESTRA'S story has a few constant themes, then they are community and family. Eaton, Barraco, Mattson, Vangelas, percussionists Dino English and Rob Koritz, and vocalist Lisa Mackey remain direct ties to the classic Grateful Dead era and ethos. The band hosts their own festival every summer, the Dark Star Jubilee; they make a point of creating a wholesome atmosphere, rooting out what Eaton describes as the "sour element" that often coalesces at larger-scale events. "We don't have ATM machines, we don't sell warm beer for $8.00. It's a BYOB festival and you can walk right up to the stage with your cooler and a chair and have a good time," he explains. "We have a big family section. We have kid parades and drum circles, and we try to make it as family-friendly as we can."

As for the skeptics, Eaton

is always down to prove a pessimist wrong. "With any band—I don't care if it's JRAD or us or Dead & Company—there are always gonna be the detractors who can't stand even the thought of what you're doing: 'No one should play this music; Jerry's gone, so go do something else.'" he says. "It's fun when someone brings one of those people to a show, and they do quite often. They go for the first time and are like, 'Wow, I can't believe I didn't come for the last 15 years!' And I think that's cool. But what I like the best, especially with our crowd, is that we probably have at least three, sometimes four, generations of people there. We'll have everything from a mother with a young child in her arms, to a grandma in her 80s and everybody in between. Seeing the young kids in the front row singing all the lyrics with their T-shirts on—that was *me*. That's how I was back in the day and they're the ones that are gonna teach the next generation."

And that chemistry is reflected onstage, too. "It's very intimate," Barraco says wistfully of their sibling-like bond. "You don't really get to do this at the level we do, unless you are a solid family. And we are. We travel on a bus, we play hundreds and thousands of shows together, and we know the language so well. One guy will be playing a phrase and the other guy will answer the phrase, and maybe somebody else will twist their way around that phrase—and it just keeps getting passed. It's like lightning on the stage—balls of lightning going from person to person. It's a very beautiful process. And just like the Dead, sometimes it works and sometimes it doesn't. But it's never terrible. It always has purpose; it's always going somewhere."

There is no denying that the members of Dark Star Orchestra are near the center of the current, post-Fare Thee Well Dead renaissance. DSO's audience is getting younger, and whether it's escapism or pure, unadulterated fun, more people are embracing the Dead songbook. Between Dead & Company, the Terrapin Family Band, Joe Russo's Almost Dead, Dark Star Orchestra and countless others, on any given night in America, there's probably a group of musicians tearing into "Bertha," or breathing life into "Morning Dew." "Like Jerry said in that one interview, 'It's your last chance to join the circus,'" Barraco says with a grin.

> "We're all from that same era. We've lived through the same times, as far as the Grateful Dead goes, and we have a lot of the same values."
> **JEFF MATTSON**

"This particular genre, this particular community that the Grateful Dead helped create, is pretty special," Eaton says. "It's gone through its ups and downs, and it's gone through it's nitrous-mafia people and the drug scene. But, at the end of the day, with Dead & Company and JRAD, we all play the music differently, we all bring something different to the scene. JRAD's interpretation of the Grateful Dead's music and our interpretation couldn't be more opposite of each other. They're both valid and they both bring people in and that's positive. Same with Dead & Company—John Mayer's brought in a fan base that never would have listened to the Grateful Dead until he started playing with them. I think all of it is positive. There's not one negative thing."

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A Life to Fix Anew

The Record Company roars back with another slice of classic-rock blood, sweat and tears on their sophomore LP, *All of This Life*

By **LARSON SUTTON**

In the living room of bassist Alex Stiff's Los Angeles home, a half-dozen long, rectangular cardboard boxes filled with signed Fender guitars lean vertically against the wall. Stiff and his two Record Company bandmates—drummer Marc Cazorla and singer/guitarist Chris Vos—carry the cargo carefully, one box at a time, out to a waiting car. Seger, Stiff's perfectly friendly, mildly protective dog, barks intently enough to let the visiting Fender rep know that this is his living room, too.

It's a cozy space, longer than it is wide. A vintage upright piano and a gleaming Ludwig drum kit are placed next to the couch, with The Record Company logo affixed to the bass drum. Shelves stuffed with hundreds of vinyl records line the walls. A turntable sits poised for the next spin of an LP.

As their new sophomore release *All of This Life* quickly attests, The Record Company makes music that stomps out of the speakers. It rumbles with arresting authority in headphones and earbuds, and on TVs and laptops, as well. But, really, it's music that should be heard, and felt, through some good old, hi-watt, solid maple behemoths. That's how the members of The Record Company listen to the music they love because that's rock-and-roll.

After wrapping up their morning promotional business, the three Record Company men sit on polished saddle stools in the shadow of Stiff's impressive stacks of wax. Seger slumps on the hardwood, decimating a stump of rawhide.

"This is where we made our first album," says Vos. That debut LP, *Give It Back to You*, spawned three Top-15 singles on Billboard's AAA chart, including No. 1 "Off the Ground," which tallied over 10 million Spotify streams and garnered the group a 2017 Grammy nomination for Best Contemporary Blues Album.

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Before there ever was a first album, though, there was a lie. Vos is a heartland native, raised on a Wisconsin dairy farm and well-versed in the commandments of honest, humble, hard work. He knocked around the Milwaukee club scene, earning his stripes at open mic nights, but after his wife Val, who worked in advertising, took a job in Los Angeles in 2010, Vos relocated to the West Coast. The singer/guitarist dutifully surrendered to the LA grind, answering Craigslist ads for sidemen, and playing pedal and lap steel on sessions and tours. It was unsatisfying and draining, so he posted his own ad.

While slogging it out on the road backing another musician, Vos called his wife and asked her to log in and renew his posting. She read her husband's plea for simpatico players and thought it was terrible. "No one would respond to this," she thought, before making some changes.

"She wrote what I refer to as a lovingly fraudulent ad," says Vos. "It made me seem a lot cooler than I am or ever have been."

Then singer/guitarist Stiff read Vos' revised ad and thought it was worth at least a phone call, but came away from their talk discouraged that he'd be part of a start-up, instead of joining a work in progress. But, he liked Vos, and invited him to the house to barbeque and listen to records.

"The two biggest things that have happened in my life said no to me at first: my wife and these guys," says Vos.

> "The two biggest things that have happened in my life said no to me at first: my wife and these guys."
> CHRIS VOS

Stiff had actually known Cazorla—a once-and-future drummer playing keyboards after being enticed to the ivories by the blues of Charles Brown—since their days attending Bucknell University. The two formed a quick and lasting bond, but their story almost ended as a musician misconnection—Stiff migrated to Los Angeles just as Cazorla moved to Nashville.

After a few years toiling on Music Row, Cazorla reunited with his buddy out west. The pair circulated in and out of unsuccessful groups. They began to dread the routine and its implicit metaphors: the bad parking and cheap carpet of dreary rehearsal rooms, and the faceless, apathetic audiences. They had long since zoomed past being twentysomething optimists in the entertainment capital of the world and were now one step closer to the scrap heap of demo tapes and dive bars.

Vos had a strategy: He would politely hang around, occasionally calling Cazorla or Stiff for a session, or sitting-in on pedal steel at one of their gigs. They spent summer nights on Stiff's porch, drinking beer and digging on John Lee Hooker. "Nobody was ever putting on records that the other guys didn't want to hear," says Vos. "I was going to find my band if it killed me."

Their friendship grew over time, and the many nights they spent sampling Stiff's colossal

Lab partners: Cazorla, Vox, Stiff (l-r)

collection certainly aligned their musical sensibilities, but a year-and-a-half later they still didn't have a band. Then, one night, Cazorla suggested setting up some mics in the living room and recording as a trio.

"I was still really skeptical of being in a band, just from all of the prior heartbreak," says Stiff.

They sat on the porch listening back to tapes of their jam. Stiff and Cazorla agreed, undeniably, that Vos possessed the rare combination of a killer voice and a keen songwriting ability. With Stiff relatively untrained as a bassist and Cazorla shifting back to drums, by default, they quickly locked into a rhythm section that flashed a uniquely restrained pocket.

"I remember looking at them both and saying, 'That sounds like a band to me,'" says Vos.

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ON NEW YEAR'S EVE 2011, The Record Company made their public debut at Harvard & Stone—a hipster's hang in the Thai Town section of Hollywood Boulevard that's more boulevard grit than Hollywood—during a party hosted by Stiff. (The bar's dress code ranges from discouraging shiny shirts to flip-flops.) In the first week of January 2012, they booked a proper gig at Harvard & Stone, and then in the spring, scored a coveted residency where they proceeded to blend their originals with A-and-B-side covers of classic 45s from The Rolling Stones, Muddy Waters and The Stooges. They handed out business cards with a free download link to the set of songs they recorded in their living room laboratory.

They also began performing shows with complimentary beer at High Fidelity, a record shop that was then located in their Los Feliz neighborhood. A third residency across town at The Satellite netted more new fans.

"We'd gone almost a year and still hadn't charged anyone a dollar to see us," says Cazorla.

Vos delivered pizzas and loaded moving company trucks. "We were calling ourselves The Record Company—in LA—and we didn't know if we could even get a record deal," Vos adds. But Stiff's experience composing music for television and film exposed opportunities for song licensing, and The Record Company's homegrown tracks started popping up on CBS's *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* and BBC America's *Orphan Black*.

"I'd get emails saying a TV show wanted to use a song," says Stiff. "All of us would be like, 'Yes, of course.'"

Vos is quick to add: "We've never said yes to anything we didn't like. Even in the early days, we passed on a few. There are things we will and won't do."

The Record Company remain a democratic entity. On the porch that first night, certain of the music they had just created, Vos laid out a deal: They would split everything

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Jen Rosenstein

Friends From Home

Dawes circles back to the studio ace who helped craft their original CSNY-inspired sound for *Passwords*, a warm, worn-in set of atmospheric songs that may be their catchiest collection yet.

By **JUSTIN JACOBS**

"I FEEL LIKE THE luckiest guy in the world. We get to make records like *Passwords* and have a career? In 2018? It's honestly unbelievable."

That's Taylor Goldsmith, the singer-songwriter and guitarist for California rock band Dawes. It's an early morning in mid-May, and Goldsmith is in New York City, a country away from the warmer coast where he was born and raised. He's there to support his fiancée, actress and singer Mandy Moore, at work on her hit TV show, *This Is Us*. A common theme when talking to Goldsmith nowadays is gratefulness—for Dawes' steady climb, for the kismet that led to their sixth album, for his band of brothers (which includes bassist Wylie Gelber, keyboardist Lee Pardini and his actual brother, drummer Griffin Goldsmith) and, naturally, for his upcoming wedding.

He's also grateful that no matter what critics think of *Passwords*, which was released on June 22 via their own HUB Records, Dawes has passed the brink of destruction. Their fans are also in this for the long haul.

"That's always been our dream," he says. "[That our fans would] subscribe to artist over album. It's like a David Lynch movie. I don't know what *Inland Empire* was about at all. And if it was the new movie by Joe Schmoe, I'd probably say, 'OK, no thanks.' But I'm onboard with David Lynch, so I'm going to dig in on everything and try to unearth something I love."

Goldsmith knows that Dawes' hearty, lyrical and nuanced rock-and-roll sound is a far cry from Lynch's famous idiosyncrasies, but the point stands: The members of Dawes are growing and changing and they believe their fans will keep the faith. Further, *Passwords* is no *Inland Empire*. In fact, it may be the band's most accessible, easily-devoured album ever—

instantly catchy story-songs that share as much sonically with Dire Straits as Gram Parsons. It isn't a coincidence that it was produced by Jonathan Wilson, the singer-songwriter and studio wiz who helmed Dawes' first two albums. *Passwords* is a full-circle album; Dawes is coming home.

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WHEN DAWES CUT THEIR debut *North Hills* in 2009, they were young men updating the folksy roots-rock of their idols. The Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young comparisons they received were justified. Griffin was only 17. They'd been gigging around Los Angeles when Wilson took interest and invited them to his home studio in Laurel Canyon.

"He took us under his wing and produced our first songs for nothing," remembers Griffin from his LA home. "It changed the course of our lives. We were all figuring it out together."

North Hills brought Dawes immediately into the new-folk movement then populated by The Avett Brothers, Fleet Foxes, The Felice Brothers and Conor Oberst. They dropped 2011's ragged, rocking Wilson-produced *Nothing Is Wrong* just as the guitarist released his own psychedelic desert-folk opus *Gentle Spirit*. Benmont Tench, Jackson Browne and others voiced their support of both acts; Robbie Robertson used Dawes as his backing band for some rare media appearances. Generational lines were fluid. But for 2013's *Stories Don't End*, Dawes turned to star rock producer Jacquire King. David Rawlings sat behind the boards for their next album, the decidedly funkier 2015 release *All Your Favorite Bands*, before they shuffled things again by bringing back their former Simon Dawes bandmate Blake Miles—who also worked on *Stories Don't End*—to produce 2016's eclectic, rollicking *We're All Gonna Die*.

To Taylor, the shifts were imperceptible, just a band growing as musicians and as young men—even as critics and fans alike pounced on *We're All Gonna Die*'s cranked-up arrangements, often crediting newly joined keyboardist Pardini.

"We're learning how to do what we do in real-time. I've been learning how to play guitar right in front of everybody—I didn't go to college to learn how to make records," he says. "When you listen to *American Beauty*, you can tell Jerry is just learning how to play pedal steel. He doesn't really know how yet and that's beautiful. Then you hear later stuff and he's obviously come a long way—or George Harrison on slide guitar, from his scrappy playing with The Beatles to some of the greatest slide playing ever on *Brainwashed*."

Dawes spent much of last summer opening for John Mayer, then Kings of Leon—hit-making acts that also creep into the gossip pages. All the while, Taylor had been quietly crafting a batch of nearly 20 songs. They'd all sprung from one he called "Crack the Case," inspired by an interviewer who'd put him on the spot: What *did* he think about President Trump? "I'm a young singer from a band in Los Angeles," he says. "What did she think my response would be?"

"The first song is always the hardest to write," he says. "Then everything else has that first song as a jumping off point. It gives the coming record context."

The band had spent months playing massive, outdoor venues "45 minutes outside of major cities. We were waking up on our tour bus with nothing around," laughs Griffin. "We were playing as well as we ever had but, being on tour, we were feeling starved for time in the studio."

Initial band discussions mapped out winter rehearsals fading into spring studio sessions, allowing the songs to crystallize. Wilson was never far from their memory—Pardini had even clocked in time in his touring band before joining Dawes. After three records without him, "It was time to get back in touch with this dude who was so important to us when we were starting out," says Griffin. "And now, it felt like we both had very clear ideas of what our strengths were."

Taylor made the call from a tour stop that October.

"For all I knew, he'd say 'I hate your band now,'" he says. "I asked if he wanted to hear the songs first. But he said there was no time."

Wilson agreed to produce the album on one condition: He was already set to release his own album *Rare Birds* and was planning to spend part of 2017 and 2018 playing David Gilmour's parts on Roger Waters' international tour, so they had to enter the studio immediately. He had two weeks free in November, and a few days in January. Then he was a ghost.

After just a few hours running through Taylor's acoustic songs in Wilson's Echo Park home, it was time to gear up to record.

"It gives you pause to go in there and know you have just two weeks to make the record. If we didn't finish, would we wait until he came back—in a year?" says Griffin. "We felt more under the gun to make something than we ever had."

"But that made these songs feel alive," says Taylor. "We were learning these songs as we were recording them. In the past, we might try 20 different endings for a song and pick the best one. But here, we were thinking on the fly. 'That works—let's move on.'"

Even with the ticking clock, both Goldsmith brothers agreed that every band member needed to feel represented in the songs.

"Dawes is not a singer-songwriter project," says Taylor. "Some bands work that way, where someone designates who does what. I'm not qualified for that role. You really get to know Lee from how he plays piano. You get the nuances of Griffin through his drums. If I were to tell him, 'No, it needs to be boom-snick-boom-snick,' I'd be halting that. Maybe a hard-liner could've said, 'Everyone needs to play this certain way.' But it'd be at the expense of our band's longevity. We want to do this for another 20 years."

Taylor hears proof in his favorite albums.

"The brilliance of certain Dylan records is not in the arrangement of the songs, but in how he let the band dictate what the songs would sound like."

During the recording process, he watched his songs evolve quickly, without warning. "Time Flies Either Way" entered the studio as a sparse, acoustic ballad.

"We'd been talking about [saxophonist] Wayne Shorter's *Speak No Evil* a lot—it was all I'd been listening to," says Taylor. "Jonathan picked up on that. Minutes before we sat down at our instruments, he said, 'Let's try it as a jazz song. There was very little guitar playing; Lee just took control on piano. He played a solo live on the floor in one take. We listened back—that's the song. We had it."

Shorter's collaborator Josh Johnson provided the finishing touch, a saxophone solo that twirls the song like a dancer.

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IF WILSON'S *GENTLE SPIRIT* and Dawes' *North Hills* and *Nothing Is Wrong* inhabited an earthy, classic-rock corner of the musical spectrum, then *Rare Birds* and *Passwords* are testaments that the artists have grown in the same direction while apart—both are filled with gorgeous, atmospheric textures, creating an aural glow that never distracts from the songs.

"He'd throw in these ingredients that would've never occurred to us. On 'Feed the Fire' he added all these arpeggio sequences. He'd hand me a sitar for an overdub," says Taylor. "He can make a song feel rich and full when it's just bass, drum and guitar—then the next section will have 200 tracks. He makes sounds live together so they stop being four instruments and become one cohesive song."

Gentle spirits: Wylie Gelber, Griffin Goldsmith, Lee Pardini, Taylor Goldsmith (l-r)

> "We're learning how to do what we do in real-time. I've been learning how to play guitar right in front of everybody."
> **TAYLOR GOLDSMITH**

The resulting LP pairs Taylor's strongest lyrics to date with Wilson's upgraded studio and fresh production approach. In the cosmic, rumbling, Steely Dan-esque "Telescope," he sings of digging through the past, searching for answers and turning up with more questions: "The stronger the telescope, the more stars there are."

Then there's the piano ballad "Never Gonna Say Goodbye," where Taylor admits, "I never knew how to be scared/'Til I found something I knew I couldn't lose."

The song was never meant for Dawes at all.

"[Mandy] was at home; I was on tour in Detroit. She reached for something in the shower and banged her head on the handle—her eyelid exploded. She called me terrified: 'I can't see, there's blood all over my face.' An ambulance was overkill, but she didn't want to be bleeding in the back of an Uber. I was freaking out because I was so far away; I couldn't help her," says Taylor. "I wrote the song in the hotel room as a telegram to her; I thought it'd be just for us. She'd hear it, and that'd be the life of that song."

Moore couldn't keep it to herself and convinced her future husband to show his band—who, in turn, loved it as well.

"You intend a love like this to last until you die; you redefine who you are completely. I didn't know how to be scared of anything because there was never much at stake," says Taylor. "But at this point, I can't see what life would look like without her. I don't know what love means outside of how I see her."

The couple might get married before the end of 2018; they'll hire a DJ, not a band, though Taylor says he hopes his father will sing at some point during the night.

Dawes presents 10 songs on *Passwords*: one bona fide rocker riding a blazing riff, a few lush ballads on piano, a few led by guitar. All were recorded live with minimal touch-ups, and plenty of lyrics that fans will be singing back to Taylor when the band hits the road with Jeff Lynne's Electric Light Orchestra in August, then headlines their own tour through the fall. The band left a month between *Passwords'* June release and their first show to give people some time to absorb the music.

"When I meet people after our shows, I'm usually thinking we'd probably be friends if we lived in the same town. That's such a joy, such a rare privilege. Our fans are music nerds just like us," says Taylor. "Some bands say they can only play a few songs off a new record but—knock on wood—we've never felt that way. It's not lost on us how cool that is."

You Must Be Having So Much Fun. Everything's Amazing.

Courtney Barnett burst out of the Australian underground thanks to her mix of clever lyrics, observational humor and slacker grooves. But with her second album, she's figured out a whole new way to tell us how she really feels.

By **MIKE GREENHAUS**

"We have a bit of a rule that we need to be brutally honest because people are so concerned with hurting your feelings that, sometimes, it's hard to get an honest answer," Courtney Barnett says of her relationship with fellow musician Jen Cloher.

COURTNEY BARNETT CAN SUM UP her current world view in a single breath: "hopefulessness." Like many of her best zingers, it's a sharp, quick-witted descriptor that's both biting and playful, pairing well with the updated slacker-rock riffs that have always helped Barnett's slice-of-life observations roll off the tongue so easily. She even used her new, soon-to-be hashtagable word as the title of the first song on her sophomore release, *Tell Me How You Really Feel*—a deep meditation on confusion and communication in the modern age, masked as an infectious set of simple rock songs.

"Whether it was an altercation with someone, a relationship or a bigger political issue, I noticed that a lot of the problems that kept coming up went back to communication," the 30-year-old Australian singer/guitarist says of the moody track. "It wasn't something I was purposefully writing about; it was just what was on my mind, and I was trying to understand it all."

Early on, she considered closing the new LP with "Hopefulessness" but, eventually, she decided to switch things around so that the record creeps in on a darker note and comes around to a brighter horizon by the time she reaches the album's wistful, yet new-dawn finale, "Sunday Roast." That's not to say that Barnett considers "Hopefulessness" to be a totally sad song either, but it does dive right into her anger with these complicated, emotional times while wading into some righteous shoegaze fuzz. At one point, she even paraphrases Nelson Mandela.

"It's that struggle between feeling hopeful, or wanting to feel hopeful, and feeling hopeless," she admits with a flash of her small but warm smile. "It could be any time, really, but the last

few years have been so full of these things."

At the moment, though, Barnett has good reason to embrace the *hopeful* part of the her new emotive mash-up.

It's a mid-May afternoon near the end of a relentlessly dreary, never-ending winter, and Barnett is hunched over and passively rocking back and forth on a barstool at a restaurant in New York's hip Bowery Hotel. Earlier in the day, she officially released *Tell Me How You Really Feel*, after blasting through her upbeat and at times grungy single "Nameless, Faceless" on *The Tonight Show Starring Jimmy Fallon* the night before. Tina Fey also sat on the couch during the program.

Barnett and her band went for dinner and drinks after their talk-show taping, so she's feeling a bit "dopey" today. Dressed in her uniform—a denim shirt and black jeans—and sporting a purple baseball cap with a koala on it, she looks rock star enough for a preppy woman sipping her glass of wine to not-so-subtly inch closer to eavesdrop as Barnett digs into her three-year lag between solo releases. But she doesn't scream *famous* enough for the bartender to stop his casual conversation with another customer from seeping into the interview. Nearby, New York University is in the middle of its commencement ceremonies and there's a palpable air of celebration in the area; the streets are filled with students sporting purple caps and gowns.

Barnett has a few of her own celebrations on tap, too, including an interactive art-happening at a Downtown New York space later in the day and an intimate album-release show at a venue she's long outgrown, Brooklyn's Music Hall of Williamsburg, the next night.

"We put an invite out to a couple of visual artists—gave them the brief on *Tell Me How You Really Feel* and gave them some film—and they created these really diverse and interesting little collections of photos, and I love it," she says of that evening's presentation, while fidgeting with a magazine laying on the bar. "It's been so cool seeing people's interpretations and stories because it's obviously so broad. And there are these red telephones you pick up and you can hear someone talking to you. When we launched the album, we had a little box on my website and people could say how they really felt so we recorded a bunch of them [and] a couple of people read them out loud. They're beautiful and really varied. Some are funny and some are silly, and some of them are vulnerable and sad."

Ever since Barnett burst out of the Australian alt-psych underground with "Avant Gardener"—a bouncy, autobiographical account of an asthma attack and ambulance ride where she admits, "I was never good at smoking bongs/ I'm not that good at breathing in"—she's built a career out of making small, personal stories feel like big moments, with enough matter-of-fact observational humor to earn comparisons to an episode of *Seinfeld*.

"Court has one of the best views on the world I've ever seen," her wide-smiling, shaggy-haired bassist Andrew "Bones" Sloane says. "She'll often point something out to me knowing that I'm the only one around who would get what she's showing. But she has that connection with anyone that ends up around her."

"Sometimes it's nice just to be lighthearted, but sometimes it's definitely a defense," Barnett says with a small smirk. "It's OK as long as you are aware if it."

Barnett's early EPs and full-length debut, 2015's *Sometimes I Sit and Think, and Sometimes I Just Sit*, were visceral, episodic tales mostly focused on her friends and youthful adventures. On *Tell Me How You Really Feel*, she turns her keen eye inward, digging into her own hopes, dreams, fears and relationships. Oftentimes, she tested her new material out on Jen Cloher, her romantic partner and sometimes creative collaborator, first.

"We have a bit of a rule that we need to be brutally honest because people are so concerned with hurting your feelings that, sometimes, it's hard to get an honest answer," Barnett says before trailing off. "It's hard because you don't wanna put too much [stock] into what someone else thinks, but we really trust each other's opinions. So we try to be pretty honest with each other."

From her second album's evocative title to her songs' honest lyrics, Barnett's change in tone was immediately noticeable. "Life on the road doesn't give you much personal space, so you tend to think a lot more about where your life is—what you're doing, how you got there, that sorta stuff," Bones adds. "When we were getting all the songs down before hitting the studio, I noticed the more personal approach and felt that this record might be a little bit darker than the previous one. She's been through a lot these past couple of years—gotta get it off your chest somehow."

Though she's far from a singer on a soapbox—as an out, liberal female musician who has unwittingly turned into a feminist icon—Barnett can't help but be saddened by the current state of world and the political headlines that dominate her feed. As a shy, somewhat-neurotic, creative individual who blatantly titled a tune on her new album "Crippling Self-Doubt and a General Lack of Confidence," she's also had to deal with the pressures of catapulting from a punky, DIY guitarist to an ambassador of wry, Aussie indie-cool. The whole communication thing, even in a solid relationship with someone like Cloher, is still something she's actively working on, too.

"It's about just being open," Barnett says of her new album and process. "And I figured out that a lot of it is just about vulnerability—being open to being vulnerable, communicating in that way."

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BARNETT WAS BORN IN Sydney in 1987, and grew up in the city's northern coastal suburbs, before attending St. Michael's Collegiate School. Her family wasn't particularly into music—"dad seemed to like a lot of jazz and blues, and mom liked mostly classical, but I think the only contemporary thing they had was an ABBA record," she says—yet she quickly fell under the spell of '90s gods like Nirvana and No Doubt. At the tender of age of 10, she started learning how to play guitar and dabbling in songwriting.

"I was always trying to start bands with people in school and, when I was 18, I started performing my own songs in bars and joined a couple of bands," she says, echoing the line she seems to have always walked between bedroom recording artist and basement jam-session pal. "I was doing my solo stuff on the side still. I kind of made a band and then I didn't record my first EP until I was about 23."

Upon moving to Melbourne, she fell in with a group of area musicians and started playing in Immigrant Union, a psychedelic-folk and country outfit that boasted Brent DeBoer of The Dandy Warhols. "I filled in, playing Brent's parts on guitar a couple of times, and then he had to go on tour and, when he came back, they were like, 'You should play slide guitar with us,'" she says nonchalantly.

It was through Immigrant Union that she locked in with her now-steady rhythm section of Bones and drummer Dave Mudie, who were affectionately referred to as The Courtney Barnetts early on. "She was quietly playing slide guitar, and I shared some chips with her and we chatted about music," Mudie reflects. "She is pretty cheeky." (The trio's work with Immigrant Union can be heard on their second studio release, 2014's *Anyway*.)

Meanwhile, Barnett started showcasing her material with Mudie and a few other musicians; when an early bassist moved away after she record her first EP, Bones stepped in to provide the low-end, but not before her former bandmate expanded

Hope in a world of "hopefulessness"

her mind by introducing her to a group he often covered, the Grateful Dead.

"We met in a little skate bar called the Blue Tile Lounge on Smith St. in Fitzroy," Bones says nostalgically. "CB was working at this bar along with my brother, who had told me to come down and meet her because she was the coolest. So I went down and met her and she *was* the coolest. When Court dropped that first EP, my mind was blown. I listened to it on repeat for months. Early on, there were more members in the band and then it ended up as CB3 for a bit. We really found our footing in those early tours as a three-piece."

CB3 started gaining some local traction, thanks to her early EPs, *I've Got a Friend Called Emily Ferris* and *How to Carve a Carrot into a Rose*, which she released on her own Milk! Records, but she didn't truly cross over to the U.S. until she compiled and released the mini-albums as the package that might as well have been her full-length debut, *The Double EP: A Sea of Split Peas,* in late 2013. (A true grassroots effort, Barnett started Milk! with some money she got from her grandma.)

Serving as something of a primer, the tracks, and especially the single "Avant Gardener," helped Barnett sign with Mom + Pop records and fueled a 2014 North American club tour that seeded her current ravenous fanbase. She roared back with *Sometimes I Sit and Think, and Sometimes I Just Sit* the following year. The album, which Barnett recorded at breakneck speed with her band, cemented her sound—a teen-spirit-inducing bolt of '90s guitar rock and Pavement-like lyrical swagger that was still loose and groovy enough to feel in line with the post-jam festival scene. Barnett appeared on major TV programs like *SNL* and *Ellen,* and even scored a prestigious Best New Artist Grammy nod.

"Coming from Australia, when you get here and there's people at a venue to see you, it's just like, 'Where did you come from? How do you know about me?' It's amazing," she says, sounding a bit aloof without coming off as pretentious.

Instead of immediately capitalizing on her success with a quick follow-up EP, Barnett busied herself with a variety of side-projects while she got her creative juices flowing. Most publically, she released the conversational, collaborative album *Lotta Sea Lice* with Philadelphia indie-folk guitarist Kurt Vile. Both musicians brought a stack of new songs to the sessions and rounded out the set with covers by Cloher and Tanya Donelly of Belly and The Breeders.

"We just became friends through touring and a couple of mutual friends," Barnett says of *Lotta Sea Lice*'s genesis. "We planned to record a song when he was passing through Melbourne, just to make it easier to hang out. So we booked a studio and we were like, 'Well, we got the studio, why don't we do another one?' We both wrote songs with the intention of doing them together because we were so distant. It was more of a collaboration *in* the studio."

Barnett also used her time off to work with Cloher; she appears on 2017's self-titled album and, earlier this year, returned to clubs in the U.S. to showcase the new songs as part of her wife's backing band. The couple first met about six years ago through the Melbourne music scene. She was a fan of Cloher, who was then the more established musician. However, Barnett's career started to blossom a few months after they got together.

"The first time I saw Courtney play was in the front bar of the Tote in Collingwood, Melbourne," Cloher says. "It's a classic, sticky-carpet, graffiti-in-the-toilet sort of pub that is well loved by local musicians. I'd known Court for a few years but this show made a real impression on me. For someone who seemed very quiet and shy in normal life, there was a confidence and ease onstage. I remember thinking how melodic and catchy her songs were. She had this natural ability to write these effortless melodies that stayed with you for days. At the moment, I'm humming her new album all the time. It drives you crazy how they all get in there."

> "For someone who seemed very quiet and shy in normal life, there was a confidence and ease onstage."
> **JEN CLOHER**

It was a hard time for Cloher, who had been slogging it out in clubs for years, but she's recently scored a fair amount of buzz of her own. "I like to be open and honest in all of my relationships," Cloher adds. "If you can't express what's going on with your partner or closest friends, then life is too lonely. I'm honest in my own music because I love that quality in other people's art. We're all using art to examine life, and my own perspective is the only one I can speak to with any authority on."

Last fall, Cloher opened for Vile and Barnett's run, marking the 44-year-old Australian musician's first major U.S. outing (the same management and PR companies look after both women's careers). Barnett and Cloher also both oversee Milk! Records, which Barnett says is a five-minute drive from her house in a space that is used "half for the label and half for music making." On most days, Barnett will walk the 30-minutes to work and listen to the music she recorded the night before.

"I put on headphones and listen to the demos," she says. "I wrote a lot of my album that way, walking back and forth."

Barnett can't pinpoint the exact moment she started working on her new release, but she's been crafting the songs at least since her last album cycle. She stops short of landing on any specific creative hurdle, but does admit that she always "has a bit of writer's block," and working with Vile and her wife helped spur the album along.

"That's part of the journey of it anyhow—it's the constant blocking and unblocking,"

Barnett says. "That experience with [Kurt] gave me something else to focus on. That's all it is sometimes, just stepping away from it. I don't really have a solid goal, or process, I was just kind of writing and kept on writing. I love what I do—keeping it open to different things popping up. If a Jen show pops up, then I do that. Otherwise, I was kind of writing or working at Milk! Records in Melbourne, but they were quite separate things."

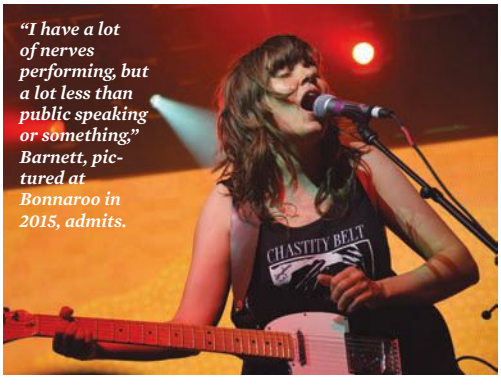
Whether consciously or not, a bit of Vile's hazy, wooly vibe did creep into the yearning "Need a Little Time" and the breezy, ode-to-honesty "Walkin' on Eggshells." (The latter selection contains the album's most cosmic solo and some cool boogie-woogie piano.) She shows off her Seattle music side on the aforementioned look at gender studies "Nameless, Faceless" and truly kicks out the jams on the punk-trash assault "I'm Not Your Mother, I'm Not Your Bitch," spinning the verse "I get most self-defensive/ When I know I'm wrong/ Think we all can agree/ I try my best to be patient/ But I can't only put up with so much shit."

Some songs on the record are from the depths of Barnett's archives. "I started writing 'Sunday Roast' when I was 13," she said. "I wrote the main guitar part and just always remembered it. I've tried to put words to it before, but always failed. So it's really nice to see that song's growth, and I added the outro part as almost like a chorus. I started 'Help Your Self' [a narrative, loping look at serenity] when I was 15. I always find it interesting, and revealing, to look back at songs and just see how they've changed. I'll figure out what they mean [and], as time goes on, they become clearer. I really like that part of the process as they develop. When I perform them for different people, you can almost see how they're hearing it, and it becomes a different song."

Years ago, Barnett faced backlash for covering Kanye, but she hasn't lost her quirky edge. Now, in between verses of "City Looks Pretty" that talk about ignored cell-phone calls and the shifting lines between strangers and friends, she sings that "the city takes pity on your injured soul/ and heavenly prose ain't enough good to fill that hole."

Once she had about 70 percent of her new cuts written, Barnett booked a studio near her house and recruited the same crew that fleshed out her previous record. "I just work better with a deadline sometimes," she says, easing into her grin. "Once I know that I'm nearly there, then I can push myself a little extra bit further. It was a really nice process—getting back together and making another album a couple of years later in a different studio. It was a similar vibe. We worked really long hours and late nights, but it was good."

Cloher adds, "Nearly all of the guitar on the album—especially the hooks and solos—are Courtney's. These songs have less of a specific narrative; they're not tied to an event."



"I have a lot of nerves performing, but a lot less than public speaking or something," Barnett, pictured at Bonnaroo in 2015, admits.

Earlier in her career, Barnett slimmed her quartet down to a trio since it was a more economical way to tour internationally, but The Drones' Dan Luscombe, an alum of her outfit, has played guitar on both her albums. Katie Harkin also signed on as part of Barnett's live band, adding keyboards, guitar and some estrogen to the project. In addition, two musicians who helped patent Barnett's sound a generation ago, identical twins Kim and Kelley Deal of The Breeders, offered cameos.

"I was passing through when they were in the studio making their new album [*All Nerve*]," Barnett says. "We dropped in to see them and they needed some vocals on a song, so we jumped in and sung this thing. Me and Kim have stayed in touch for a while, and I thought that she was perfect for the chorus line of 'Crippling Self Doubt and a General Lack of Self-Confidence.' Having them record with me is just this other level of encouragement and this strange connection of two different times, really. But there was a likemindedness. It's like finding a long-lost friend."

* * *

THE NIGHT AFTER releasing *Tell Me How You Really Feel*, Barnett and her backup band officially usher in the next era of their career with their industry-heavy show at the Music Hall of Williamsburg. "I have a lot of nerves performing, but a lot less than public speaking or something," Barnett had said the previous afternoon. "I still can't do any sort of public speaking well. I think with music, at least, I have the safety of [the song]. The song is written, worked on and refined, and I know what I'm saying. So that makes it a lot safer. I still get so nervous, but it's just a bit more dialed-down each time."

Yet, there's little sign of that soft-spoken singer-songwriter onstage: Barnett comes out swinging, running through her new LP in its entirety, before offering a selection of greatest hits. An Amazon video crew can be spotted roaming the crowds. The night really starts heating up with album's third tune, the angular guitar jam "Charity," which offers a close look at her relationship woes while still taking down the overly medicated, and meditative, modern world. "You must be having so much fun/ Everything's amazing/ So subservient I make myself sick/ Are you listening?" she sings, the song's lyrics winking at the often falsely amplified social-media world.

Despite working her way up the venue rungs from dingy clubs to major theaters during the past few years, she says she still can't quite wrap her head around how to navigate New York City. Yet the venue's VIP section and back-floor industry hot box are packed with just the right mix of promoters, managers, publicists, writers, bloggers and passionate fans to ensure that the evening's clubhouse vibe is in full effect.

Barnett currently has international dates scheduled deep into the year, including stops at marquee spots like Brooklyn's Prospect Park Bandshell, Rhode Island's Newport Folk Festival and the Bay Area's Treasure Island Music Festival. She's started to work on her next LP already, too, in the loosest way possible.

"In the notebook, nothing much bigger than that," she says sheepishly.

She's well aware that *Tell Me How You Really Feel*'s title can take on several different meanings, depending on one's intuition. Perhaps, as she continues to grow and gain confidence, the LP's name will take on a different tone for her as well.

"You can hear just how good a guitarist she is on this album, which is something people don't realize until they see her play live," Cloher says, demonstrating some of that honesty that defines their love language. "What shines through on this album is Courtney's personality; she's not hiding behind overly clever lyrics. The melodies and song structures have more economy and the fat has been trimmed, which gives the songs more authority. If you compare this album to her last, or want it to be like *Sometimes I Sit*, then you'll be disappointed because it's very different. But it's a lot more mature and a real grower. It's a truly great album." R

Dean Budnick

REVIEWS

Compiled by MIKE GREENHAUS

Dave Matthews Band

Rene Huemer

DAVE MATTHEWS BAND

Come Tomorrow RCA

Dave Matthews Band has always thrived onstage—harnessing their own improvisational freedom and feeding on the kinetic energy of an audience.

In the studio, far from their safety net of freewheeling interplay, they've employed every imaginable method to spark that flame—from the sleek production of 2001's *Everyday* to the cut-and-paste experimentation of 2005's *Stand Up*. With their most recent LP, 2012's *Away From the World*, the group stepped backward after the late-career triumph of 2009's *Big Whiskey and the GrooGrux King*, piling on watered-down "state of the world" messages and stripped-back balladry ("Mercy," "Sweet").

Come Tomorrow is a fiery course-correction, full of vigor, funk, absurdity and poignancy—the singular mix that makes this band so unique to begin with.

The absence of violinist Boyd Tinsley (whose hiatus due to health and family concerns has been seemingly made permanent since he was publicly accused of sexual misconduct in May) may have only emboldened the remaining players, particularly the rhythm section—even the 27-second throwaway "bkdkdkdd" is loaded with first-class groove. In the funky camp, there's "Again and Again," propelled by **Stefan Lessard**'s fuzz-bass, and the horn-fueled "Can't Stop," a deep-burning riff monster first teased onstage in 2006. "Samurai Cop (Oh Joy Begin)" is sappy, sure—a vague plea for mutual understanding in a fucked-up world—but the arrangement is a dizzying triumph of tension and release, with **Tim Reynolds** layering arena-sized guitar echo over **Carter Beauford**'s intricate drum fills.

It's thrilling to hear DMB toy with new sounds: "She" is a bluesy, snarling rocker; and vintage keyboards percolate throughout the LP, such as the spooky "Virginia in the Rain." Like *Away From the World* before it, the album loses steam when Matthews operates in solo mode—closing ballad "When I'm Weary," with its plodding piano and strings, seems destined to soundtrack an ASPCA commercial. But those lapses are brief.

A more representative moment is jazzy centerpiece "Idea of You"—a live favorite for a little over a decade—and the tear-jerking track appears here in an anthemic final arrangement, anchored by radiant horns and the frontman's youthful romantic memories. "Make me feel like a kid again," Matthews sings late in the LP. It's an appropriate lyric—a summation of *Come Tomorrow*'s rejuvenating spirit.

Ryan Reed

Dawes

Passwords HUB

It still feels impossible that that *Passwords* is already **Dawes**' *sixth* record. Isn't this a new band of roots-rock underdogs waving the Laurel Canyon flag and singing bittersweet nostalgia over crackling guitars? Nope—and with *Passwords*, the Los Angeles-based quartet has settled nicely into a role as scene elders, with the music following suit. The album is full of steady, worn-in rock grooves, world-wise lyrics and an intimate studio sound that welcomes in listeners on the first spin. The album's only real rocker is its opener, "Living in the Future," which tears open the record with a jagged, cranked-up riff and plunges forward with heavy percussion. When frontman **Taylor Goldsmith** howls on the chorus: "I'm not talkin' 'bout forever, how 'bout just getting through the night?" it's clear that he's as uncertain about living in the future as the rest of us. From there, *Passwords*' fire burns down to beautiful, warm embers that sustain fans through the evening, with piano-driven story songs leading the way. "Feed the Fire" sparks with a snaking guitar groove and the twinkling keys of late addition **Lee Pardini**, and Goldsmith questioning the toll of life in the spotlight: "How could I look so perfect on the screen and so awful in the mirror?" *Passwords* smooths out those wriggling grooves of 2016's *We're All Gonna Die* to create Dawes' most mature and self-realized sound yet, zeroing in on their strengths to reveal genuine treasures. As Goldsmith sings on the cosmic rock tune "Telescope," "The stronger the telescope, the more stars there are." *Justin Jacobs*

Leon Bridges

Good Thing COLUMBIA

It's difficult to shake the "retro" tag—when you build a career as a revivalist, your fanbase generally won't want you to act your age. With his seductive debut LP, 2015's *Coming Home*, **Leon Bridges** was rightfully dubbed the lost son of Sam Cooke—a man more interested in classic soul than flashy R&B trends. For the most part, *Coming Home* could've been cut in the late-'60s, and that classicism was an essential element of its charm. But the Texas native finally decided to embrace the sounds of his peers on follow-up *Good Thing*, working with producer **Ricky Reed** to slick up and modernize his production and arrangements. That means more synth and fewer organic grooves, more computers and less crooning. At times, Bridges sounds uncomfortable in these sleek new digs—like on the runway-pop of "Bad Bad News," which would have sounded dated in 1992, or the plodding, Strat-heavy waltz of "Mrs.," which apes John Mayer's "Gravity" so extensively that the dude should get a writing credit. But *Good Thing* mostly feels like a natural evolution, the sound of an ambitious young man seizing his moment and paying homage to every influence possible. It's a dizzying sprawl: Bridges nods to Usher (the sulking-in-the-club anthem "Forgive You"), D'Angelo ("Lions," complete with skippy, J Dilla-styled drums) and, in a rare moment of backward glancing, Marvin Gaye (the wall-of-sound soul of "Bet Ain't Worth the Hand"). Bridges may try too hard to showcase his reach, but his ambition alone is staggering. *Ryan Reed*

Father John Misty

Father John Misty

God's Favorite Customer SUB POP

On **Father John Misty**'s third album, *Pure Comedy*, singer-songwriter **Josh Tillman** presented a veritable manifesto, his sardonic worldview sprawling out across almost 75 minutes of philosophizing folk like a cynical Randy Newman in a particularly brutal hangover. On his follow-up, *God's Favorite Customer*, Misty reigns it in a bit, seemingly aware of how rewarding but exhausting his last record was—no 13-minute screeds to be found—and on "Please Don't Die" he even sings, "Oh God, you must have woken up/ to me saying that it's all too much/ I'll take it easy with the morbid stuff." Fear not—Father John Misty hasn't become James Blunt. There's still plenty of dark wit and disappointment with humanity to parse through here. The catchy "Mr. Tillman" is purely self-effacing, a faux dialogue between the singer and a hotel front-desk clerk: "You left your passport in the mini-fridge, and a message with the desk said the picture isn't his," he sings, to which he responds, "Oh, baby, don't be alarmed. This is just my vibe," before pairing his whistling with a xylophone fade-out. Misty doesn't experiment far beyond his well-worn brand of apocalyptic folk on *God's Favorite Customer*, but his songwriting is strong across the album's first half. "Just Dumb Enough to Try" has all the dusty, country ache of a Gram Parsons tune, but the relative modesty of the album is a double-edged sword—it's a more fun, engaging listen on one hand but, on the other, it lacks the absolute gems that fans discovered after focused listens to *Pure Comedy*. *Justin Jacobs*

Slightly Stoopid

Everyday Life, Everyday People STOOPID

It's challenging to contain the hazy mood and effervescent energy that **Slightly Stoopid** evokes in their live shows on a studio album. Still, each effort from the Southern California band comes as close as possible to bringing those performances into succinct recorded tracks (and even closer on their numerous live albums). *Everyday Life, Everyday People*, the group's ninth album in two decades, adheres to the essence of those onstage moments, particularly on grooving numbers like "If You Want It," which features **Alborosie**, and "Too Late." This release follows 2015's successful *Meanwhile... Back at the Lab*, and it's clear that the musicians have tapped into real inspiration here. "Higher Now" is a particular standout, with fast-talking lines from rapper **Chali 2na** and a soaring chorus that asserts that "music sets us free." The song has a swaggering guitar solo, reggae horns and hooks that feel almost pop-like, solidifying the sort of genre fusion that Slightly Stoopid has always done well. **G. Love** appears on "Everyday People," a propulsive, bluesy rock tune that surges with an undercurrent of live energy. "Talk Too Much," featuring revered Jamaican singer **Don Carlos**, emphasizes the sunny reggae vibes the band has always loved, as does "Livin' in Babylon," which uses the vocal stylings of **Yellowman**. There's a palpable feel-good nature to this album as a whole, which comes through especially on these reggae-inclined tunes. The best moment arrives on "No One Stops Us Now," a vibrant, upbeat song that allows the musicians to emphatically claim their style and intent. And at this point, it's true: No one is going to stop them now. *Emily Zemler*

Van Morrison and Joey DeFrancesco

You're Driving Me Crazy LEGACY

This is **Van Morrison**'s third new release in less than a year and, in the hands of anyone else, a late-career album with even a whiff of a jazz standard might smack of a cliché. (Unless, perhaps, we're talking about Bob Dylan.) But Morrison is no stranger to jazz; after all, way back in 1968, his definitive classic *Astral Weeks* set the tone with a flourish thanks to "The Way Young Lovers Do"—just one of many instances where his command of the idiom shone through in style. That song, along with more than a half-dozen Morrison-penned chestnuts, forms the basis of *You're Driving Me Crazy*, an ambitious collaboration with jazz organist and trumpeter **Joey DeFrancesco**, who has played with everyone from Miles Davis to Larry Coryell, and lends a vibrantly dexterous swing to the proceedings. "All Saints Day," an upbeat number that featured Georgie Fame on Morrison's 1991 album *Hymns to the Silence*, gets a righteous kick from DeFrancesco, while the backing band of **Dan Wilson** (guitar), **Troy Roberts** (sax) and **Michael Ode** (drums) meshes seamlessly, giving Van the Man all he needs to flex his voice—still just as freewheeling, interpretive and soulful as it's ever been. And then there are the standards: Cole Porter's "Miss Otis Regrets" and the classic "Every Day I Have the Blues" stand out, with DeFrancesco taking

a silky trumpet solo on the former and Morrison clearly reveling in the live atmosphere of the latter. ("That's my kind of way to hear this stuff," he laughs, after the band stops the song on a dime.) For that matter, the album sounds like a succession of first or second takes recorded live, capturing all the spontaneity on which Morrison thrives. In the wake of last year's *Roll With the Punches* and *Versatile*, it caps a compelling chapter that finds the 72-year-old Northern Irish singer in prime fighting shape. ***Bill Murphy***

Joey Alexander

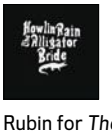
Eclipse MOTÉMA

It's OK to stop calling **Joey Alexander** a prodigy now. Although he's only 14, the Indonesian jazz pianist has already proven he isn't a fluke. Of course, he still has a long way to go before he takes his place among the innovators, but with *Eclipse*, his fourth album, the thrice-Grammy-nominated musician leaps forward yet again. Most important, Alexander is emerging as a composer of note: Six of the album's 11 tracks are his own, and they are quite often masterful. The 10-minute title track, inspired by last year's solar eclipse, is often brooding, occasionally whimsical and quite brazen—Alexander understands the element of surprise and the importance of a challenge. He's not a reticent player and savors the dare. The track, in short, is awe-inspiring. On "Space," another one of his tunes, Alexander revels in dynamics—bursts of fire are followed in short order by sudden silences. As an interpreter, a role in which he's been comfortable since his first release, he's confident but still searching; Alexander seems to know that his versions of The Beatles' "Blackbird" or Coltrane's "Moment's Notice" don't cast those songs in a new light, but he's going to give it his all anyway. It doesn't hurt one bit that the rhythm section on *Eclipse* is his finest to date. Seasoned bassist **Reuben Rogers** and drummer **Eric Harland** are the kind of accompanists Alexander needs to kick his own development into high gear, and saxophonist **Joshua Redman**'s contributions on three tunes give them an extra dimension that will hopefully be explored further. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

Howlin Rain

The Alligator Bride

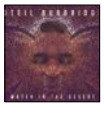
SILVER CURRENT



Since **Howlin Rain**'s early days, guitarist **Ethan Miller** has been shapeshifting. He built rock epics with Rick Rubin for *The Russian Wilds*. The world-weary *Mansion Songs* was inspired by beat poets and singer-songwriters. For the last few years, Miller's been shuffling among his scuzz trio Feral Ohms, bass duty in the psych supergroup Heron Oblivion and solo ambient guitar journeyman work as The Odyssey Cult. *The Alligator Bride* recalls Howlin Rain's earliest sound: a stripped-down, laid-back, sun-fried California guitar rock. Yet, it's informed by all the lessons learned since. Miller has put in his time with his current bandmates: guitarist **Dan Cervantes**, bassist **Jeff McElroy** and drummer **Justin Smith**. The songs are tight and deceptively simple; the changes are subtly complicated. "Rainbow Trout" opens the album with a lone boogie-woogie riff. Miller sings, then the band comes a-thumping in classic-rock mode. That pattern recurs across the record: a campfire fingerpick amps up verse by verse, climaxing in blazing dual guitar cataclysms that rub Cervantes' blues riffage against Miller's distinctive wham-bent squall. That's true, too, on the proggier "The Wild Boys," an ode to Southern California's seedy inland underbelly. The record is also quiet and, at times, lovely—a collection of poems about the road and California home. On an exquisite revision of Leroy Carr's "In the Evening," heartsickness is not about a lover's cheating, but, rather, a longing for the ocean, the mountains and the pines. The title track pays homage to that great California combo Crazy Horse. Still, while the early records felt colored with flavors comped from rock history, this sounds like Howlin Rain. ***Richard B. Simon***

Oteil Burbridge

Water in the Desert SELF-RELEASED



Oteil Burbridge goes for deep soul on his first solo album in nearly 13 years. The idea of any specific genre gets thrown out pretty quickly—the nine original songs cover R&B, jazz and gospel, with a focus on groove and feel—yet the entire collection emphasizes music from the soul. The name *Water in the Desert* is not incidental; Burbridge treats every note like soulful salvation. It's music played from the heart and aimed for the heart. None of it really sounds anything like the Allman Brothers, with whom he played for 17 years, or Dead & Company, his current gig—but listening to the album will help you better understand Burbridge's contributions to each. Vocalists **Alfreda Gerald** and **Mark Rivers** (stepping out from the Tedeschi Trucks Band backline) shine, bringing the songs to life, along with the bassist's big brother **Kofi Burbridge** on keys and flute. Oteil's bass often pops to the fore, like the sweet, concise solo on "Chasing," but this is not a bass thumper's vanity project. Oteil is aiming for something deeper. The music operates on the mind, body and spirit. It hits you in the head, heart—and soul. ***Alan Paul***

3hattrio

Lord of the Desert OKEHDOKEE

Sometimes it feels like all possible combinations of musical styles, techniques and genres have been tried and exhausted. But Utah's **3hattrio** are the first string band in recent memory to make sand-blasted doom-haunted futuristic gris-gris music that seems to draw on old-timey Celtic reels, campfire songs and pirate sea chanteys, while filtering portions of the vocals through Auto-Tune and giving it all an unusual folkloric-trap aura. On desert songs like "Wastelands of Yesterday," "Faith" and "Skeleton Tree Dust," they dive into such loaded themes and images as smoke, fire, the brutal sun, destiny, faith, war and death. The trio's leader is **Hal Cannon**, a scholar of cowboy poetry. Banjo, fiddle and upright bass are the core elements here, but a dash of hip-hop and dub production create refractory loops and shimmering sonic mirages. Touches of Middle Eastern melodies show up, batted around between banjo and fiddle. If one imagines a record of sunbleached Southwestern meditations on memory, god and fate that's given an Eno-ish atmospheric treatment—suggesting heat lightning in the distance—then that's something like what 3hattrio achieves on this record. It's a skeletal gothic vibe. Fans of Tom Waits might detect a related note of spookiness. Is it possible to imagine a place where the Sons of the Pioneers blend with Drake, or where Gonjasufi and Tex Ritter intermingle? That's this place. The music conjures tumbleweeds and buttes, petroglyphs and cactus. The American desert tends to overwhelm with a sense of vastness, and 3hattrio do a nice job of creating an atmosphere of big mystery and weirdness without resorting to sonic clichés of the West. ***John Adamian***

Kamasi Washington

Heaven and Earth YOUNG TURKS

Only a visionary like jazz virtuoso **Kamasi Washington** could classify a 16-track, 145-minute double-LP as scaled-back. But *Heaven and Earth*, the sax god's second solo endeavor, is just as cosmically adventurous as 2015's *The Epic*, the freewheeling triple-platter that cemented his status as the hip figurehead of a newly flowering jazz renaissance. Here, Washington reconvenes with members of the eclectic West Coast Get Down—including bassist **Thundercat** and drummer **Ronald Bruner Jr.**, both of whom lent an organic thrust to Kendrick Lamar's genre-shattering 2015 rap masterpiece, *To Pimp a Butterfly*. But the saxophonist composes in a space beyond conventional "band." Many of these lushly arranged pieces build to massive crescendos of choir and orchestra, anchored by a doubled rhythm section reminiscent of Miles Davis' classic fusion period via *Bitches Brew*. On occasion, the auditory overload is almost too much of a good thing: "Can You Hear Him" builds from a sauntering Latin groove into mind-rattling chaos, with percussion clanging wildly out of time. And, of course, even the most adventurous jazz fans will have trouble sitting through the entire two and a half hours without a full-blown intermission—it's like watching the director's cut of a Terrence Malick movie without a pee break or therapy session. But from the dreamy fusion of "Tiffakonkae" to the symphonic space-jazz of "Vi Lua Vi Sol" (complete with vintage, Herbie Hancock-level vocoder) to the rap-funk vibes of "Street Fighter Mas," the level of composition is unrivaled in modern jazz—or elsewhere. ***Ryan Reed***

Nolatet

No Revenge Necessary

ROYAL POTATO FAMILY

Back in 2016, after the release of **Nolatet**'s debut album *Dogs*, pianist **Brian Haas** expressed the utmost reverence that he and his bandmates have for drummer and group elder statesman **Johnny Vidacovich**, the New Orleans legend who has nearly three decades on Haas yet still takes over a studio room. "He has the bar raised so high that we're all just trying to rise to the occasion that he creates by his presence," Haas told *Relix*. "He doesn't play music; he is music." For *No Revenge Necessary*, Nolatet's second effort, Vidacovich and Haas, who also leads the Jacob Fred Jazz Odyssey, once again entered the studio with percussionist **Mike Dillon** and bassist **James Singleton** to record a collection of songs that feels wild and loose, yet still meticulously crafted. Though much of the album is a product of the members' individual—and collective—improvisational prowess, the melodies that bolster these far-reaching explorations can be just as affecting. Opener "Lanky, Stanky, Maestro," written by Haas in honor of Vidacovich, lives up to its name thanks to a languid, bouncy piano riff from Haas with the New Orleans vet's expertly unexpected drums—a splashy cymbal here, a drumline-tight snare rattle there—providing the landscape. On the delightfully angular "Black Sheep," Singleton's bass lays down the initial melody along with Haas, while Dillon takes control on "Elegant Miss J," which ends with some rapid-fire vibraphones building momentum. Closer "Malabar" comes in two distinct parts, with a fuzz bass and speed-jazz drums powering the aggressive opening section and light tabla percussion underscoring the horn-infused wrap up. ***Matt Inman***

JULY/AUGUST 2018 CD SAMPLER

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1

COURTNEY BARNETT
"City Looks Pretty"
From the album *Tell Me How You Really Feel*
MOM + POP

The mantra that every experience, emotion, betrayal and weird feeling one can't grab hold of has the potential to become material in their work forms a kind of mission statement for Barnett's thrilling new record: Take your vulnerabilities and everything that scares you, and twist them until they fit into someone else's hands.

courtneybarnett.com.au

2

COSMIC SUPERHEROES
"Big Star"
From the album *Big Star*
Self-released

Raleigh, N.C.-based Cosmic Superheroes push the limits of time, space and tone, creating grooves entangled with melodic hooks. The 2018 release of *Big Star* delivers a thought-provoking theme, filled with songs showcasing creative songwriting, vocals and improvisational skills.

cosmicsuperheroes.com

3

THE FREEWAY REVIVAL
"Wanderin'"
From the album *Revolution Road*
Self-released

Dedicated songcrafting is the cornerstone of The Freeway Revival. Crafty musicianship, shimmering vocal harmonies and vivid lyrics portray a true traveling band forged on the road. Their explosive blend of roots-rock, funk, mountain music and psychedelic soul creates a genre-dissolving sound that feels strangely familiar yet remains entirely original.

freewayrevival.com

4

DYLAN DOYLE
"Tomorrow"
From the album *Tomorrow*
Self-released

Dylan Doyle's sound is a mix of old-school rock meets modern sound, a style uniquely interesting and defying classification. Virtuosity of Jimi Hendrix with the sensibilities of John Mayer, song writing reminiscent of a young Bob Dylan, Doyle is poised for a bright future.

dylandoyleband.com

5

POLICULTURE
"Karma"
From the album *Mountains to Cross*
Self-released

Policulture is the original mountain reggae band from Boulder, Colo. Their sound emanates heavy drum and bass with a melodic horn section, roots rhythm and liberating messages. Policulture's upcoming album *Mountains to Cross* is based on principles of perseverance. It will be available in August 2018.

policulturemusic.com

6

MILK FOR THE ANGRY
"Let the Batteries Die"
From the album *Make Like An Animal*
City Son Recordings

Milk for the Angry is a San Francisco-based psychedelic-rock band formed in 2016. Their first LP *Make Like An Animal* (2018) is a must-have for lovers of the garagey and psyched-out sounds of the Bay Area. "Like stepping into a wonderfully gritty postcard of the Golden State," says The Deli Magazine SF.

milkfortheangry.com

7

HELL & HOLLAR
"Showdown"
From the EP *442*
Self-released

Hell & Hollar is a rock band from South Florida, featuring Blake Burns on guitar and vocals, Nate Largent on drums and Johnny Dusko on bass. Drawing from their many influences that span the areas of blues and heavy stoner rock, they are developing a brand of rock all their own. Their heavy yet inviting sound is refreshing straightforward rock music that anyone can have a good time with. This power trio has an old-school rock vibe with an open eye on the future.

hellandhollar.com

8

STRINGDINGERS
"Could It Be"
From the EP *Different Kind of Ride*
Self-released

Stringdingers are a Minneapolis string band with jam roots reaching into many genres and inspirations. They recently released their first CD, *Different Kind of Ride*, and are already constructing the next one with a stockpile of original music under their wing. Stay tuned and enjoy the unique dinger sound.

stringdingers.com

9

MOJOMAMA
"Sing You the Blues"
From the album *Red White and Blues*
Self-released

Mojomama and their brand of funked-up blues has been a mainstay on the Colorado music scene for over a decade. Mojomama's fourth studio album, *Red White and Blues*, blends the roots of the blues with a contemporary twist that will rock you to your core.

mojomama.net

10

SARA HULSE BAND
"Infinity"
From the album *Tabula Rasa*
Self-released

Singer-songwriter Sara Hulse will draw you into her world with her haunting voice and her poignant lyrics—profound and thought-provoking, sad and funny all at once. Sara has developed a sound truly all her own. You can't help but be drawn into her music.

sarahulse.com

11

URBAN SHAMAN ATTACK
"Cofeveve"
From the album *Character Assassination*
Echo Echelon

Urban Shaman Attack, or USA, is a psyche delic-jazz quartet from Wilmington, Del. Influences include: Sun Ra Solar Arkestra, Miles Davis, Acid Mothers Temple and Ozric Tentacles. We are Richard Todd on drums and percussion, Carl Bailey on Clarinet, Robert McClelland on guitar, and Dwayne Todd on keys and kaossilator.

facebook.com/usawilmo

12

THE GOLDEN GRASS
"Runaway"
From the album *Absolutely*
Listenable Records

The Golden Grass is the definitive heavy boogie-rock group of today! They're a monstrous rock and roll power trio with three lead singers and a dazzling classic touch. The group effortlessly draws their influence from the greatest musical ideas from when rock ruled the world; it's as if they truly are from that golden era.

listenable.net

13

tomatoband
"Gun"
From the album *Routine Interactions*
Wappoo Cuts Records

Charleston, S.C.-based quartet, tomatoband, is constantly charting new sonic territory through responsible psychedelic exploration. The band embarks on an East Coast mini-tour in August, and continues to captivate audiences with poignant songwriting and a commitment to unique composition and improvisation. Their hobbies include eating and rollerskating.

tomatobandmusic.com

14

MOS GENERATOR
"Shadowlands"
From the album *Shadowlands*
Listenable Records

Mos Generator formed during the winter of 2000 in Washington, from the ashes of a 10-year off and on collaboration between long time veterans of the road and studio. The need to strip down to the basics of hard rock was apparent from the start and continues to be the foundation for all the band's recent material.

listenable.net

15

EDITORS PICK: LAKE STREET DIVE
"You Are Free"
From the album *Free Yourself Up*
Nonesuch Records

Lake Street Dive is a four-piece, featuring drummer Michael Calabrese, bassist Bridget Kearney, singer Rachael Price and guitarist/trumpeter Michael "McDuck" Olson. "You Are Free" comes from Lake Street Dive's album, *Free Yourself Up*, their second album on Nonesuch Records.

lakestreetdive.com

16

JAMOFF! WINNER: JENNIFER B & THE GROOVE
"What's Done Is Done"
From the EP *Downtown*
Roadrunner

Jennifer B & the Groove is a high-octane, soulful band led by a singer-songwriter who has powerful pipes landing between Aretha Franklin and Janis Joplin. "What's Done Is Done" is an original song currently being considered for a movie soundtrack and getting radio airplay in Europe.

myjenniferbthegroove.com

For more information about how to appear on the CD sampler, please contact Connor@relix.com.

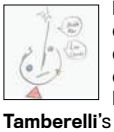
Dirty Projectors

Lamp Lit Prose DOMINO

"She keeps it 100 in the shade," **Dave Longstreth** croons in a wispy falsetto minutes into his eighth LP. "She is so dreamy." A fanciful, pitch-shifted guitar lick flutters giddily; reversed strings and harmonica wander through the mix. The songwriter, who once seemed to thrive on lyrical elusiveness, nods with a carefree zeal to Federico Fellini and The Strokes' Julian Casablancas. The playfulness feels purposeful, arriving after **Dirty Projectors'** self-titled 2017 album—a 48-minute play-by-play of Longstreth and his former bandmate/girlfriend Amber Coffman's breakup that was illuminating in its emotional reach but exhausting in its musical scope, as the mastermind burrowed down rabbit holes of electronica, freaky jazz and symphonic art-rock. *Lamp Lit Prose* is equally unpredictable, but with an exuberance that keeps the experimentation aglow with the help of many guests including **HAIM**, **Syd**, **Empress Of, Amber Mark** and **Dear Nora**. "Zombie Conqueror" nails the sweet spot of ornate folk and jagged, mutant hard-rock that propelled his 2009 masterpiece, *Bitte Orca*; Longstreth showcases his soulful side on electro-funk jam "I Feel Energy," slipping into a sleek falsetto over handclaps and horns; "You're the One" is his version of an acoustic campfire ditty, with Fleet Foxes' **Robin Pecknold** and former Vampire Weekend member **Rostam** rounding out an indie-rock dream-team on harmony vocals. "I'll always have love for what came before," he croons on the latter track. "And with you, I feel it more and more." It's a moment of unfussy sweetness on an album layered with cinematic detail. Sixteen years in, Dirty Projectors now feels like a natural vehicle for Longstreth's every emotional state and sonic whim. *Ryan Reed*

Middle Blue

Love Chords ROPEADOPE



Middle Blue, whose debut is driven by the deep-funk drumming of The Headhunters' **Mike Clark** and **Danny Tamberelli**'s rubbery bass guitar playing, know how to build sticky riffs. The New York City band laces the mix with the warm, chiming layering of **Jared Pauley**'s Fender Rhodes and founder/composer **Brad Farberman**'s frequently acidic guitar. They build it into something more ferocious and appealing than the sum of its parts, with the help of alto saxophonist and clarinetist **Jeremy Danneman**, tenor saxophonist and flutist **Jessica Lurie**, and **Dave Sewelson** of the Microscopic Septet on baritone and sopranino sax.

Middle Blue

Sometimes it sings; sometimes it shrieks. "Leany Lean" is the most sprawling track. Clark sets it up, laying down a fat backbeat as his rhythm-section partners slide in; the horns offer a singing, swirling melody before Pauley and Farberman turn in solos; and Danneman, Lurie and Sewelson lift off for some unfettered simultaneous soloing over just drums before reprising the head. "One Half of One Guitar" opens the set with single slashes of grungy guitar chords, cueing a sort-of chill-lounge groove followed by sax and guitar skronk, a playful theme and more bouts of unfettered soloing. The clavinet-limned "Guitar Banjo Hero Moon" comes off as slowed-down fusion tinted with avant-sax touches and cooled down with a long, flute-led section, while "Melvyn" shuttles from an old-school R&B vibe to some metallic rawk. "Curls" caps the set with a nominally mellow outing that turns rambunctious, opening up for a final raucous saxes-only blast, and recalling the brainy and bracing sounds of the World Saxophone Quartet. *Philip Booth*

Lily Allen

No Shame WARNER BROS.

"I feel like I'm under attack all of the time," **Lily Allen** intones on "Come on Then," the opening track on her latest album *No Shame*. The song, a slow-burning pop crooner, continues, "I'm a bad mother/ I'm a bad wife/ You saw it on the socials/ You read it online." These statements set up the rest of the tracks, which detail Allen's heartbreaking, life-altering divorce and reveal a musician who talks a big game, but is still vulnerable underneath it all. She's joined by **Giggs**, who lent a reggae tone to single "Trigger Bang" and **Burna Boy**, who's featured on "Your Choice." This is Allen's first album in four years, since 2014's *Sheezus*—a record that sometimes lacked emotional heft. That's not an issue here, especially on numbers like "Three," a piano ballad that puts Allen in the shoes of her young child as she leaves for tour. It's a deeply evocative way to imagine the adverse effect fame can have on your loved ones. She echoes a similar theme on "Family Man," an introspective tune where Allen references herself as the titular character with little time to be present at home. The collection ends with "Cake," a bouncing number that feels like throwback Allen. "If I could go back/ see myself as a child," she croons, "I'd say stick to your guns girl, in fact go get that rifle." It's a striking punctuation mark on a set filled with moments of self-doubt. Here, Allen seems to decide it's better to stand strong. "So what if it's one in a hundred," she concludes. "Who's to say you are not that one?" *Emily Zemler*

Amanda Shires

To the Sunset

SILVER KNIFE/THIRTY TIGERS

Over the course of this decade, **Amanda Shires** has quietly been making some of the best country-folk music out there—her 2016 album *My Piece of Land* was a gorgeous, if underrated, gem that demonstrated captivating warmth in her voice and down-home storytelling. On her fifth solo album, *To the Sunset*, she rounds up an all-star band that includes drummer **Jerry Pentecost**, Gregg Allman keyboardist **Peter Levin**, Nashville producer du jour/bassist **Dave Cobb** and her husband **Jason Isbell** on guitar. And this set of songs is unlike anything she's done before. From the warped, electronic-y opening notes of the first track "Parking Lot Pirouette," it's clear that Shires is looking to ditch that mellow twang that was present before for a woozier, more experimental sound. As a result, the 10 tunes sound bigger and more daring, with much more heft behind her voice. As for the subject matter, *To the Sunset* continues Shires' tradition of storytelling, with a sharper edge. On the jangly guitar-driven "Break Out the Champagne," she touches on the apocalypse, heeding a call to "get on with the shit show," while on "Take on the Dark," she explores anxiety and personal tumult, coming to the conclusion that "it's OK to fall apart." The closer, "Wasn't I Paying Attention?" climaxes with the narrator's friend setting themselves on fire—a dark, disturbing piece of imagery to leave listeners with. It's always risky when an artist goes down a new path but, in this instance, it paid off big time for Shires—it's easily her best album to date. *Mike Ayers*

Durand Jones & The Indications

Durand Jones & The Indications

DEAD OCEANS/COLEMINE

Durand Jones & The Indications make funk and soul that's warm and deep. Fans of the Daptone Records catalog or of Frazey Ford will find a kindred soul in Jones and his crew, which coalesced as a group in Bloomington, Ind. One might hear a connection to Smokey Robinson, Sam Cooke, Al Green, Curtis Mayfield or even Terence Trent D'Arby in Jones, who can sing with just the right touch of raw edge. He can shout, but he's just as likely to coo and go velvety. The singing's great, and the songs—like "Make a Change," "Is It Any Wonder?" and "Can't Keep My Cool"—are very good. Special credit has to go to the players in The Indications, with a bassist who is remarkably restrained, allowing the depth and confident strength of the drums to take a central role. And the pairing of organ and delicate trebly guitar playing adds a churchy simmer, offset by a pleasing brightness. The Indications strut some of their Meters chops admirably. Glowing horns (Jones played and toured in a classically leaning saxophone quartet for a time), space-amplifying reverb, tasteful eyedropper applications of backing vocals, occasional gnarly guitar tones and pervasive slap-back make the album a deep-listening situation. Just the sounds of the drummer's thumping kick, rimshot and spitting hi-hat are enough reasons to hole up with headphones. The band knows when to stop a groove for a beat or two to create tension and big payoffs when they set everything back in motion. *John Adamian*

Gang Gang Dance

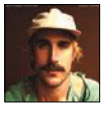
Kazuashita 4AD

Floating somewhere in the hazy, mystical wilderness between ambient electronic, dream pop and experimental studio wizardry, **Gang Gang Dance** have never been the

easiest act to pin down—and the trio's been adrift since its wonderfully weird *Eye Contact* back in 2011. Theirs is the music that M83 might make if someone slipped him an Ambien and acid at the same time. Thankfully, seven years away haven't dulled the New York crew's creativity. *Kazuashita* is a blissful, otherworldly ride—one that blossoms anew with repeated listens. Singer **Lizzi Bougatsos** has always been the emotional core of the trio, lifting these technicolor compositions out of the improvisational badlands with her stunning, ethereal vocals. She starts things off strong on *Kazuashita* with "J-TREE," which builds a whole universe on a jittery, staccato riff—with lullaby piano, click-clacking percussion and shimmering guitars all coloring outside its lines, as if Bougatsos is whispering "run free" to each instrument. A vocal sample cuts in, culled from the Dakota Access Pipeline protests: "This land means everything... look over there, at all the buffalo!" and the awe and wonder sparks the song into a genuine, ecstatic celebration. First single "Lotus" seems constructed in the shadows, a wobbly synthesizer effect rising and fading until Bougatsos whips the song into a blazing groove. "Snake Dub" throws listeners off balance—vocals are played in reverse, the sounds of closing doors play percussion, and electronic beeps and dolphin calls dance around each other. *Kazuashita* is a challenging listen, but let yourself sink in—you'll be bouncing on the moon in no time. *Justin Jacobs*

Rayland Baxter

Wide Awake ATO



With *Wide Awake* Nashville's **Rayland Baxter** capitalizes on the potential he displayed on his impressive 2012 debut, *feathers and fishHooks*, and the excellent *Imaginary Man* in 2015—The album is bound to be one of the year's best rock records. All the ingredients are there—intelligently crafted storytelling lyrics and immediately memorable melodies, as well as a living, breathing studio sound and enough raucous rockers and hushed folk tunes to keep everyone satisfied. Baxter's collection of likely sonic influences is bulletproof: the crisp pop-rock of The Kinks, the weary-soul guitar of Tom Petty and the cinematic heartbreak of early Ryan Adams. The singer-songwriter mixes those sounds and more into a style very much his own, delivering his tunes with a loose, playful vocal style that suggests he'd be the guy to buy the whole bar one last round. Dr. Dog's **Eric Slick** takes on percussion duties, and **Butch Walker** handles the bass. This is warm, earthy rock-and-roll for big, joyous sing-alongs. Opener "Strange American Dream" presents a perfect bar band anthem (jangling keys, bluesy guitar), and Baxter is bittersweet as he lights up the chorus: "The whole world is wired up on the red, white and the green/ and all the boys and girls are growin' up in a strange American dream." He continues the critique on the scathing "79 Shiny Revolvers," singing, "You really wanna save the world, man/ well I wanna save it, too/ We can blow 'em away/ the American way—79 shiny revolvers." This is modern, American rock music at its finest. *Justin Jacobs*

Black Moth Super Rainbow

Panic Blooms RAD CULT

Out of the Pennsylvania swamps emerge **Black Moth Super Rainbow**, the world's trailblazers of codeine-friendly electro-psych. *Panic Blooms*, their sixth LP, thrives on the fascinating and singular contradictions of their earlier work: It's atmospheric yet hooky, purposefully amateurish. Crooning eerily detached choruses through his trademark vocoder, frontman **Tobacco** continues to create beauty from grime—like fashioning a sculpture from the grossest gunk at a garbage heap. His musings about "Sunset Curses" and "Aerosol Weather" arrive like distant transmissions from a stoned martian—like the recordings from the barely intact black box of a wrecked spacecraft. The production is profoundly nasty, as if Black Moth recorded the album 30 years ago on a half-decayed cassette, buried it in a field, dug it up and released it without cleaning it off. The title track is a chillwave-ish haze, interrupted with comical electro debris that clogs your headphones like hair in your bathroom sink. "Bad Fuckin Times" takes the same tact, with Tobacco's reveries interrupted by bouts of noxious noise—but somehow it feels downright *sexy*, a sort of dirt-chic. It's fun to imagine what these songs could sound like in a more "normal" context: The album's melodic centerpiece, "Backwash," could be a futuristic R&B slow jam if only Childish Gambino had gotten his hands on the beat. All in all, *Panic Blooms* is more of the same—but when no one else can even remotely imitate your "same," why even try different? *Ryan Reed*

Dr. Lonnie Smith

All in My Mind BLUE NOTE

Dr. Lonnie Smith, the 75-year-old revered statesman of B-3 organ jazz, has watched his funky mix gain inroads among jamband crowds and, two years ago, he reunited with his '60s label. *All in My Mind*, recorded live at Manhattan's Jazz Standard, feels something like a full-circle album: vintage soul-jazz grooves, along with familiar jazz gems and a pop cover. Smith and his trio mates—guitarist **Jonathan Kreisberg** and drummer **Johnathan Blake**—open with Wayne Shorter's "Juju" and the organ accents, six-string chops and trap-set kicks setting up the polyrhythmic feel, before setting the stage for hyperactive solo turns. It's an exuberant, joyful characteristic of nearly every track here, including the closer, the Freddie Hubbard jazz standard "Up Jumped Spring." On the jazzier side of the spectrum, too, is a mellow take on Tadd Dameron's ballad "On a Misty Night," with Kreisberg's silky melody lines and bluesy soloing nestling atop Smith's lush chords as the trio cranks moves from a hush to a shout. **Joe Dyson** subs for Blake on a bouncy, steadily shifting version of Paul Simon's "50 Ways to Leave Your Lover" that has Kreisberg unfurling long, loose-limbed figures before Smith takes over to crank it all up a few more notches. The title track, which the organist recorded twice on '70s albums, is reborn here with his spiritually minded lyrics brought to life with powerhouse singer **Alicia Olatuja** out front. "Alhambra," another Smith original, is the disc's most ambitious piece. The extended, moody synth-generated brass and woodwinds intro morphs into chiming guitar and finally hard-swinging trio action, a long crescendo of colorful variations on a theme, suddenly crashing back into those synths. It's hypnotic stuff. *Philip Booth*

Wye Oak

The Louder I Call, the Faster It Runs MERGE

It's been a few years since **Jenn Wasner** and **Andy Stack** took the radical step of reinventing **Wye Oak** with a synth-heavy sound on 2014's *Shriek*. At the time, Wasner felt they had "tapped out" the duo's guitar-based approach to songwriting, feeling instead the draw of the bass, while Stack found himself

Ear Crystals BY RICHARD GEHR

The search for other-world audio gems

Swiss bliss. Centuries of neutrality and brotherly love in Switzerland have produced not only the cuckoo clock but also a unique style of minimalist groove music. Together since 2001, pianist **Nik Bärtsch**'s **Ronin** trim their sails and sharpen their already laser-like focus on *Awase* (ECM), the combo's first studio release in eight years. Slimming down to a quartet appears to have only intensified Ronin's near-telepathic discipline and their unique triangulation of chamber minimalism, jazz improvisation and crown-chakra funk. "Locked-in" only begins to describe the superimposed rhythmic cycles and uncanny interplay that defines this piano trio, plus reed instrument (mononymic **Sha** plays both bass clarinet and saxophone), as they navigate Bärtsch's ever-expanding repertoire of "modules," each one a tuneful testament to the Swiss notion of direct democracy.

Torn stars. Bärtsch/Ronin's Zurich comrades **Sonar** plays a heavier electric sort of grooving minimalism. American outside-guitar hero **David Torn** adds microsampled cosmic debris to Sonar's double-guitar oomph on their thrilling new *Vortex* (RareNoise), which he also produced, adding layers of grit, volume and perhaps MAGA-inspired chaos to the quartet's already off-kilter tritone tunings. The music churns skyward with both patience and passion. Torn explodes chords into millisecond shards and sustains single notes through eons of emotion in rhythmically complex multipart compositions that sound unlike anything else in rock.

Fela travelers. Speaking of rhythmically interlockin' groove things, Antibalas guitarist **Marcos Garcia** got the idea for his spin-off group **Here Lies Man** the day he realized that a certain Fela Kuti guitar riff sounded like a heavy-metal riff played over one of the Afro-Cuban rhythm patterns known as claves. Garcia riffs and churns over a drums-and-congas pulse on *You Will Know Nothing* (RidingEasy), the Los Angeles quartet's second album. The most interesting tracks, though, may well be "Floating on Water" and "You Ought to Know," lumbering instrumentals with liquid atmospheres that transcend style and geography.

Aboriginal spin. If your spirit animal happens to be a crow, tuna, crocodile or (best choice) octopus, then the indigenous Australian artist **Geoffrey Gurrumul Yunupingu**, who died last year at age 46, has you covered on his final album, *Djarimirri: Child of the Rainbow* (Skinnyfish). On it, traditional aboriginal chants are orchestrated—as performed by the Australian Chamber and Sydney Symphony orchestras—to sound like lush American minimalist works. Cellos and basses mimic didgeridoos, and the blind singer's soulfully strident voice cuts through it all like a message from beyond.

Unidentified mystifying objects. If you've always intended to leap into the cryptic iconoclastic world of anonymous Jon Fishman fave raves **The Residents** but didn't know where to start, then the time has arrived. London's Cherry Red label has reissued the first four Residents albums—*Meet the Residents*, *The Third Reich 'n Roll*, *Fingerprince* and *Duck Stab/Buster & Glen*—in double-album packages containing loads of bonus outtakes, unreleased tracks and live material. Since 1972, The Residents have subliminally disrupted the pop world with dozens of conceptually fascinating albums characterized by beautifully cracked analog electronics and surreal, disturbing lyrics delivered with both childlike naiveté and antediluvian solemnity.

committing fully to keyboards. Together, they made an album that also took advantage of their growing comfort level with recording and producing themselves. On their fifth LP (not counting their album of revised previously-released tracks, *Tween*) *The Louder I Call, the Faster It Runs*, they've refined the process with songs that sparingly reincorporate the shoegaze-y guitars that Wye Oak is most known for (going back to their 2007 debut *If Children*), while updating the slick production of *Shriek* with an even keener ear. It comes through in the title track—a flawlessly mixed dream-pop excursion, with Wasner's layered harmonies front-and-center, that recalls St. Vincent or vintage Cocteau Twins. The sonic palette spreads out further on "It Was Not Natural," which captures an astonishing electro-acoustic lushness (anchored by Stack's resonant piano chords) that seems to soothe Wasner's uncertainties—not just with the current state of the world, but with her own place in it. "As I expected, with time it hasn't gotten easier," she sings. "I have to work now at things that used to be like breathing"—a line that might ring with resignation if it weren't delivered with such brimming confidence. For all the creative risks they take on, Wasner and Stack consistently manage to bottle the lightning and reshape it to their every whim. That's never easy, but when it works, it's always rewarding.
Bill Murphy

Lee Barbour

Ultrasound AVANT GARAGE

Composer **Lee Barbour** spends much of his time scoring for film, but with this passion project, he's created a soundtrack to accompany the biggest scene of his life—becoming a father. Built around field recordings taken during his wife's (musician Vikki Matsis) pregnancy, the album melds ambient electronica with the soaring jazz-tinged guitar peaks that have landed him in the studio with musicians like Joe Beck (session guitarist with James Brown and Miles Davis) and saxophonist **Kebbi Williams** (Tedeschi Trucks Band). Barbour is a master of mood, utilizing harmonizers and reverb to evoke the feeling of floating in a womb. The vibe morphs from the D'Angelo-tinged "Angels Makin Angels" into Hammock-esque etherealness. There are lighter moments—the joyful outbursts of a friend discovering the pregnancy in "Ms. Emily" and the smooth funk of "A Quarter of an Inch"—and segments of dramatic intensity, like the other-worldly yet incredibly present, "Birth." When Barbour sings, as on "A Moment That Wasn't," there's a Bon Iver-vibe to the beat-backed vocalizations. But it's an instrumental track, "Procession"—a meditation on the coming together of blood and energy to form a new being—that shines brightest. As big, resonant guitars enter over ambient crescendos and electronic rhythms, the sound meld evokes pure hope. Lee Barbour is one of those rare musicians who can imagine a multilayered composition in his head and then manifest it into aural reality. With *Ultrasound*, he's captured every ounce of the inspiration a new father feels, and conveyed it into a masterwork full of tears, laughter and poignancy. It's the ultimate sonic documentary of the joy, pain and growth during this era in a family's life. ***Stratton Lawrence***

Young Galaxy

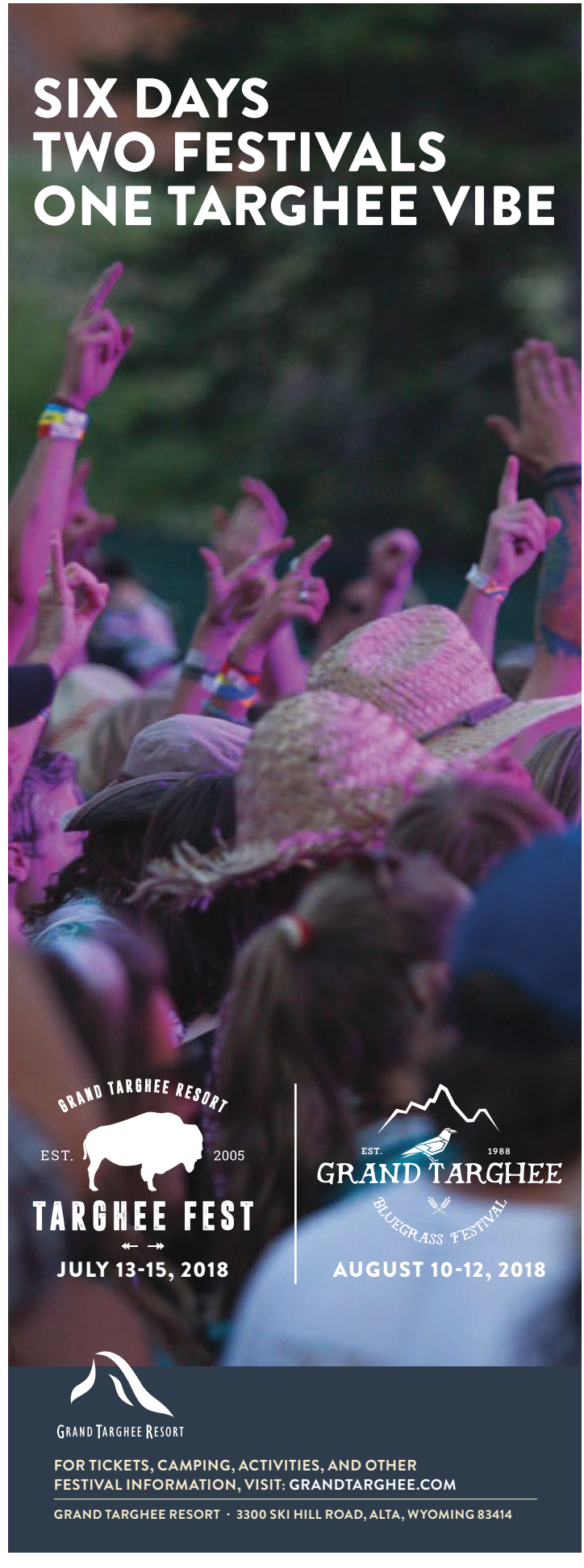
Down Time SELF-RELEASED

A warbled synth cloud, a muted kick-drum thump, a faintly ticking hi-hat: "Seeing Eye Dog," the second track on **Young Galaxy**'s sixth LP, is a master-class of electro-pop minimalism. Not much happens in its four hypotonic minutes, but have you remember every little nuance—the clipped cadence of **Catherine McCandless**' layered croon and how those distant synth strings slowly crescendo on the chorus, but never harmonically resolve. The Montreal duo began life as shoegaze revivalists, but mostly ditched the guitars for crystalline synths over their past few albums, alternating between narcotic lulls (2013's *Ultramarine*) and focused, '80s-style songcraft (2015's *Falsework*). With *Down Time*, the band nestles into a hushed, laptop-crafted atmosphere that feels less self-consciously retro, often displaced from any particular era. The record's luxurious first half is like a deep-tissue massage, heavy on the oil—from the slinky pulses of "Under My Wing" (with McCandless' weightless voice shadowed by a deep-pitched growl) to the trip-hop-echoing clatter of "Show You the Valley." The vibe is intoxicating, even on the drowsy cut-and-paste drone of "Glowworms"—but the hooks eventually disappear, leaving behind more stylish mood than melody. (Take the slow-burn first half of "Frontier," which basically amounts to a one-chord synth pad, some kind of rain sound effect and the rumble of what sounds like a drum machine dying a slow death.) On *Down Time*, less is either much more—or way, way less. ***Ryan Reed***

King Tuff

The Other SUB POP

For a decade, **Kyle Thomas** has played the role of **King Tuff**, a hesher weirdo whose lyrical focus has centered squarely on rock-and-roll wisecracks. "And I don't stop/



stop/ stop/ 'cause I'm an animal," Thomas sang on his official 2008 debut, *Was Dead*. And his records continued in that mold up through 2014's *Black Moon Spell*, which found him howling about sex and partying over scuzzy fuzz guitars in a manner that felt a little too familiar. With *The Other*, Thomas eyes a wider horizon. It's the most varied and spacious Tuff record yet, skillfully showing off cosmic country, disco, freaky folk ballads, gospel and singer-songwriter moves that wouldn't sound out of place on a Beck LP. The bong-rip charm of previous records isn't gone, but there's an increased air of mysticism in the grooves. "Through the cracks, where you dispersed/ And became the whole universe," he sings alongside **Jenny Lewis** on "Thru the Cracks," boasting the record's spaciest sentiments. While it's hard not to miss the snotty charm and buzz-saw hard rock of Tuff's former self, the record doesn't entirely devote itself to mellow gold: "Ultraviolet" updates his rock swagger with a melodic complexity without shedding any of his sugar-rush choogle. Thomas has always insisted that King Tuff was a character and, increasingly over the course of his hyped records, one that didn't reflect his true self all that much. *The Other* finds him shifting shapes with skill and heart.

Jason P. Woodbury

Mike Zito

First Class Life RUF

The blues is always at the root of **Mike Zito**'s music, both in his work with Royal Southern Brotherhood earlier in the decade and the recordings he's made on his own for more than 10 years. As on 2016's *Make Blues Not War*, and *Gone to Texas* a few years before it, Zito gets down in the trenches for *First Class Life* (his 15th in all), which he's calling his most personal recording to date. On these songs, Zito addresses topics that mean something, from his love for his wife ("Dying Day") to the matter-of-fact "The World We Live In." But it's the title track–which charts his dive into addiction and the crawl back out–that hits hardest. It's often dark and difficult, not your basic 21st-century bar-band blues party-all-night anthem. The music is up-tempo and effervescent, betraying the nakedness of the lyrics: "When I was down, I was down on my knees, but down didn't stop me from begging please, please, please," he sings in the first line. There is redemption, in love and in faith, but there isn't any sanctimony in Zito's telling of it, and there are good times too. *First Class Life* may have been a cathartic exercise for the artist, but you're welcome to just marvel at the guitar playing. The album's greatest strength is in Zito's ability to take his tales, get into the studio with a cooking band and turn it all into first-class blues rock. *Jeff Tamarkin*

Big Sam's Funky Nation

Songs in the Key of Funk, Volume 1

SELF-RELEASED

Trombone player and bandleader **"Big Sam" Williams** cut his chops with New Orleans veterans The Dirty Dozen Brass Band and clocked in time with Elvis Costello and Allen Toussaint on their *River in Reverse* album and tour, but his funk sextet **Big Sam's Funky Nation** has remained his true calling card. The outfit's latest set starts on a high note with "4 da Funk," a thumping jam with an in-your-face beat that echoes Funkadelic's ethos as the band sings: "Get on down for the funk of it." The band's backbone is supplied by big, zooming bass lines from **Jerry Henderson**, **Keenan McRae**'s chattering guitar chords and drummer **Alfred Jordan**'s solid, four-on-the-floor backbeat. The energy doesn't let up for a second, making it impossible to stay seated. "Hot" is a sizzling, sensual song of seduction, with **Kendrick Marshall**'s synthesizer fills tipping a hat to the swinging, Minneapolis sound of The Time and Prince. Things slow down a bit for "Who's Gonna Help Brother Get Further," a groove that brings to mind the R&B hits that Toussaint penned for Lee Dorsey and Ernie K-Doe. "I Like the Music" is another unstoppable chunk of funk. While the title is chanted in the background, McRae turns in an extended psychedelic guitar solo, supported by Marshall's sustained chords and the scalding accents of Williams' trombone. *J. Poet*

Snow Patrol

Wildness REPUBLIC

Snow Patrol's evolution over the years has been surprising, particularly to those who've followed along with their career. The U.K.-based rock band hasn't released a new album since 2011, when they dropped *Fallen Empires*, so *Wildness* has a particularly unexpected punch. The album, the band's seventh, is emotionally wrought, constructed with cinematic drama, sort of like a less morose Bon Iver. On "Don't Give In," an inspiring acoustic ballad, frontman **Gary Lightbody** implores the listener to push through. "Don't you dare quit so easy," he wails, urging the audience onward. Lightbody gives you something to hope for throughout, even on darker moments like "What If This Is All the Love You Ever Get?"–a sparse track that suggests that there's less to be afraid of than we may imagine. "What if it hurts like hell?" he asks, before answering with a logical: "Then it'll hurt like hell." *Wildness*, which ends with "Life and Death," a song that takes on immensely big ideas, is about buoying up those who hear it. Lightbody has clearly been through some soul searching and he's found answers to the questions that have been posed. For a while, it felt like Snow Patrol was destined to be the go-to band for TV and movie soundtracks, thanks to the success of certain songs and their frequent use on network

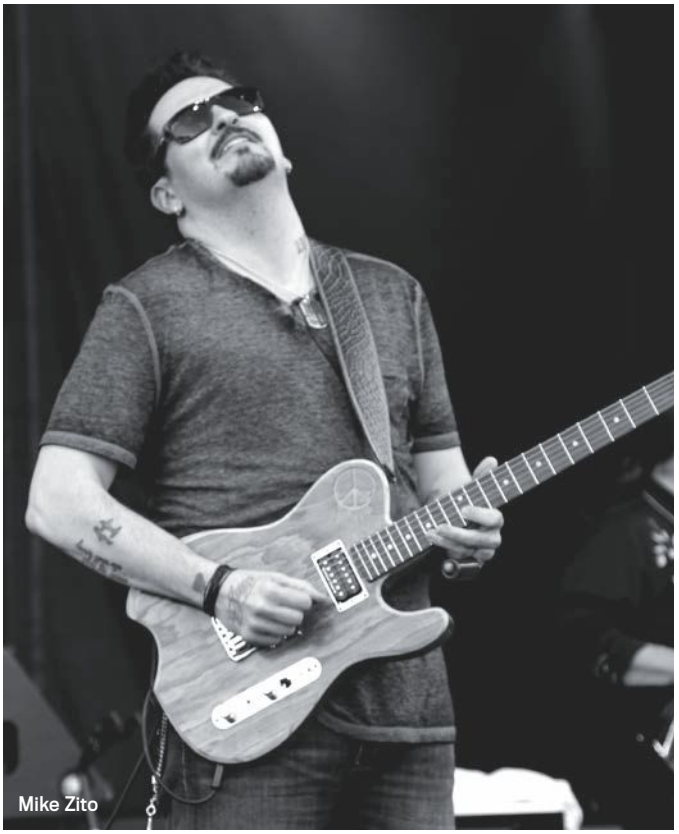
Big Sam's Funky Nation

Del McCoury Band

Del McCoury Still Sings Bluegrass MCCOURY MUSIC

Back in 1968, a promising young bluegrass guitarist and singer who'd been working with Bill Monroe, the genre's undisputed master, decided to try his luck as a solo artist. He recorded an album called *Del McCoury Sings Bluegrass* and released it on the Arhoolie label. Fifty years, many recordings, thousands of gigs and shelf-loads of awards later, the now 79-year-old **Del McCoury** is still at it. Calling his newest release *Del McCoury Still Sings Bluegrass* is a deservedly celebratory move. His skills haven't diminished and his enthusiasm hasn't flagged–and he sticks to what works. There aren't many surprises on this new one, but none are needed. From the first notes of "Hot Wired," whose title serves notice that there's some crazy pickin' ahead, through the playful closer "I Fell in Love," he displays the same ace musicianship and impassioned vocal delivery that he's proffered since that long-ago debut. Of course, he has plenty of assistance from his band, which features his two sons, **Ronnie** (mandolin) and **Rob** (banjo), bassist **Alan Bartram** and fiddler **Jason Carter**. (Del's grandson, **Heaven McCoury**, adds electric guitar to "Hot Wired.") Each is a virtuosic player with an equal command of the roles of accompanist and soloist. Whether they're playing a standard ballad ("Bottom Dollar") or a breakneck breakdown (the breathless "Joe"), the Del McCoury Band is reliably consistent, and that's a good thing.

Jeff Tamarkin


Mike Zito

dramas, but, instead, the musicians have grown up, and they're willing to use their experiences to guide anyone who needs a hand. This album, produced by **Jacknife Lee**, is a helpful beacon of hope. *Emily Zemler*

Ben Howard
Noonday Dream REPUBLIC

Over the course of three albums, Mercury Prize–nominated and platinum-selling British folk singer **Ben Howard** has been ironing out the flashier points in his music. His 2011 breakthrough, *Every Kingdom*, was an easy and rewarding listen—bright acoustic arrangements, lovelorn and first-time catchy hooks. Then came the lush, more subdued *I Forget Where We Were* in 2014. And with *Noonday Dream*, Howard has created a mysterious, haunting whisper of a folk album; campfire sing-alongs be damned. But immediate doesn't necessarily mean better. Rather, *Noonday Dream* may be Howard's most accomplished album, a collection of stripped-down, but rich, complex songs that only come into view with repeated listens—and with enough time, reveal themselves as stirring, stunning masterpieces. Take the challenge and be rewarded tenfold. *Noonday Dream* opens with single "Nica Libres at Dusk," which surfaces after 40 seconds like a mirage across the desert, an acoustic spark rising from the dry, cooling air. Indeed, meditative may be the most apt description of this album—there's nothing freewheeling about this dark, shadowy folk. Howard's boiled down his sound to its essentials. Each brushed drum stroke, each echoed background vocal, each plaintive violin, each twinkling guitar note cuts deeper than you'll expect it to. On "The Defeat," Howard sings as if in a trance—remaining icy and calm even as distorted guitars whip and spin around him. It's unnerving and mesmerizing at once. The song fades with a full minute of terse instrumentals, and Howard seemingly gazing silently across the open desert.
Justin Jacobs

The Milk Carton Kids
All the Things That I Did and All the Things That I Didn't Do ANTI-

The Milk Carton Kids, **Joey Ryan** and **Kenneth Pattengale**, have often been compared to Simon & Garfunkel, and now, on their fourth studio album, the MCK have learned what S&G did on their second: adding a band can really open things up. Bringing in a rhythm section and melodic instruments provides the acoustic-music duo with more real estate atop which to overlay their close, pristine harmonies and plaintive lead vocals. Any trepidation among longtime fans that some purity may be lost in the shuffle can be set aside in advance. *All the Things*... not only

still sounds just like 'em but, despite the expansion, is arguably their most intimate work to date. It's a darker record though; within those keening voices lives some serious heartbreak. New songs like "Unwinnable War" and "Blindness" chart the despair of a failing relationship—in the latter, steel guitar, violin, cello and alto clarinet juxtapose with the duo's dissonant harmonies and then, starkly add, "I thought I heard a whisper reaching from the past/ An echo, a reminder that nothing ever lasts." Pedestrian title aside, the epic "One More for the Road" shines, taking time to find its way and reveal its copious riches over 10-plus minutes—it doesn't say much, but it doesn't have to as its utter loneliness is made clear. And "Mourning in America" is an anthemic study of truths and sorrows, so grand and yet so painful in its raw exposures. Ryan and Pattengale have made a more potent statement here than ever before, and its eloquence suits them.
Jeff Tamarkin

Ray Davies

Our Country—Americana Act II LEGACY

As the Kinks' chief songwriter, singer/guitarist **Ray Davies** wrote some of the most vivid and insightful portraits of British life ever created, penning tunes such as "Well Respected Man," "Waterloo Sunset" and "The Village Green Preservation Society." He's even been knighted. But Davies has also been fascinated by America since childhood, has spent much time traveling the country—and, along with the Kinks, was also banned from performing in it—and has written of the culture in both song and prose. His 2013 book *Americana* detailed his relationship with the U.S.A., and was followed in 2017 by the album of the same title. Now there's a sequel to bring the story up to date. *Our Country* opens with the title track, a familiar immigrants' tale: "Gone is the land I used to know so well," the narrator laments as he revisits his old stomping grounds. From there, it unfolds, with Davies bridging his new songs with spoken-word segments that put context to the music. The first of those interludes, "The Invaders," recalls the arrival of rock-and-roll and Davies' own role in putting his homeland on the rock map; then came stardom and its attendant pros and cons. There's the road, the groupies, the tedium and the triumphs. There's tragedy too: New Orleans looms large here, the city where, in 2004, Davies was shot while attempting to thwart a mugging. As a companion piece to the book, *Our Country*, as is true of its predecessor, contains some beautifully framed storytelling. However, ambitious and honest as the album is, it's also highly forgettable.
Jeff Tamarkin

Matt Costa

Santa Rosa Fangs DANGERBIRD

Matt Costa is an exceptional artist whose past several records barely caused a stir when released. That not only makes *Santa Rosa Fangs* a welcome return, but also, for many listeners, an impressive introduction. There's sheer exuberance radiating through many of these songs—an unfettered enthusiasm that makes nearly every number a sudden standout. In the past, Costa has channeled John Lennon and Nick Drake to opposite extremes but, this time around, he simply harnesses his own identity as a pop savant with the hooks, assurance and savvy needed for attention-grabbing songs. The assertive sound of album-opener "I Remember It Well" leads into the irresistibly effusive "Sharon" and later, the equally infectious "Time Tricks." Even when Costa opts for reflection over resolve, as illuminated by songs such as "Ritchie" and "Real Love," the melodies come across as affecting as ever. Costa claims that *Santa Rosa Fangs* was intended as a conceptual work revolving around three California siblings in a post-adolescent struggle for identity, but the narrative is less important than the resilient refrains and the illuminating ambiance that shines through. Five albums—and a documentary soundtrack—in, Costa has found his own voice and all the additives needed to set him up for stardom. Or, to put it another way: *Santa Rosa Fangs* is every bit as incisive as its brazen title implies.
Lee Zimmerman

Matt Costa

Tower of Power

Soul Side of Town
ARTISTRY/MACK AVENUE

50 years after forming, the members **Tower of Power** have released their 25th album, and it's not an insult to say that *Soul Side of Town* is wholly consistent with pretty much everything that the band's ever done. ToP found the formula that works for them right at the outset and they've largely stuck with it—no need to pretend to be something they're not. A good part of the reason for that lack of deviation can be attributed to the stability in the group's front line. Co-founding saxophonists **Emilio Castillo** and **Stephen "Doc" Kupka** and rhythm section extraordinaires **Francis "Rocco" Prestia** (bass) and **David Garibaldi** (drums) are right where they've always been, and although numerous other musicians and vocalists have come and gone, the core four's vision has stuck around for good. This album, which they began working on in 2012, includes two different lead vocalists, **Ray Greene** (who has since joined Santana) and newcomer **Marcus Scott**. Both are excellent and steeped in soul tradition, but Tower of Power has never relied on their singers to define the band, and that rule still applies. Among the highlights is the title track, a danceable feast of hot guitar licks, punchy sax, wailing lead vocal, slick backup singers and that ever-funky bottom. Bookending it are two tributes to the band's career-long home base, the East Bay, all steamy and sweaty and Latin-fied. It's all instantly identifiable—a few seconds in, anywhere, and you know who you're listening to. *Jeff Tamarkin*

PLUNDERING THE VAULTS

Procol Harum

Grand Hotel (2-Disc Expanded Edition)
Exotic Birds and Fruit (3-CD Edition)
The Prodigal Stranger (Remastered & Expanded Edition) CHERRY RED

Contrary to popular opinion, **Procol Harum** didn't slide into a creative decline after the 1971 departure of guitarist Robin Trower. Instead, the British prog-rock band expanded to a quintet, recruiting guitarist **Mick Grabham** and bassist **Alan Cartwright** for their unsung masterpiece, 1973's *Grand Hotel*. This new edition of the LP showcases the album's literal symphonic sweep, sweetening the orchestral flourishes ("TV Ceasar") and sharpening the band's heavy, organ-driven attack ("Bringing Home the Bacon"). The bonus tracks, meanwhile, are barely worth a cursory listen: The early version of the title-track feels half-formed without the grandiose orchestrations of the final product. The band retreated from the strings for their seventh LP, 1974's *Exotic Birds and Fruit*, a set of leaner, harder-rocking tracks that emphasized Grabham's bluesy guitar riffs ("Conquistador") and the ornate dual keyboard attack of frontman **Gary Brooker** and **Chris Copping** ("As Strong As Samson"). This lavish reissue offers a perfect chance to revisit their most underrated album, but the muddy fidelity of the BBC radio concert on disc two will likely confine you to the original set. (Nonetheless, Brooker's random, between-song stage chatter gives the set some extra replay value.) But one of these reissues is not like the other: 1991's *The Prodigal Stranger* was a commercial flop in its time, and it remains a dud almost three decades later. The hype was heavy back then, with Trower and original organist **Matthew Fisher** rejoining the lineup for the LP. But their talents were underutilized at every turn, and the songs themselves were an insult to the band's esteemed legacy. The album marked an awkward slide into middle age—the sound of a band appealing to its early fanbase while conceding to the trends of modern-rock radio. They

Pamela Littky

nodded to "Higher Love"-era Steve Winwood—with dismal results—with the bland belting of "The Hand That Rocks the Cradle," attempted to layer in a borderline hip-hop beat on the lifeless "Man With a Mission," and piped in some canned synth-strings on world-weary ballad "(You Can't) Turn Back the Page." No amount of revealing bonus tracks can save *The Prodigal Stranger* from itself. ***Ryan Reed***

The Flaming Lips

Scratching the Door: The First Recordings of The Flaming Lips
Seeing the Unseeable: The Complete Studio Recordings of The Flaming Lips 1986-1990

WARNER BROS/RHINO.

If today's **Flaming Lips** were a film, then multi-instrumentalist Steven Drozd would be the director, and singer **Wayne Coyne** would be its charismatic star. The frontman's enigmatic stage presence and conceptual grandeur is the inextricable nucleus storing the band's DNA. So it's easy to forget that Coyne's brother **Mark** fronted the band in its embryonic form. *Scratching the Door* documents that overlooked period, back when the Lips reveled in noisy post-punk that hardly resembles the symphonic, psychedelia that flowered later on. It isn't unlistenable—if only because of our illuminating hindsight. Thirty-two years ago, no one knew that these Oklahoma goofballs would eventually craft *The Soft Bulletin*, but *we* do, so we can smile at their deadpan quest for freedom on "My Own Planet" and amateurish atmospherics in "Garden of Eyes." Many of the rarities and demos are laugh-out-loud ludicrous, like feedback-drenched covers of Led Zeppelin's "Communication Breakdown" and the *Batman* theme song. And the originals sound equally indebted to classic-rock heroes: In its aimless first form, minor-key ballad "Jesus Shootin' Heroin" comes off like an improvised Bob Dylan parody, down to the nasally vocal tone. *Seeing the Unseeable* collects remastered versions of the band's first four LPs for Restless Records, showcasing their early attempts at Pink Floyd psychedelia ("One Million Billionth of a Millisecond on a Sunday Morning" from 1987's *Oh My Gawd!!!*) and poignant emotional breakthroughs ("Rainin' Babies" from 1990's *In a Priest Driven Ambulance (With Silver Sunshine Stares)*). As on *Scratching the Door*, the demos here—including the previously issued "Mushroom Tapes"—are mostly ragged curiosities with little to no shelf life. But *Seeing the Unseeable* is an essential completist's view of the Lips at their pivotal pre-fame period—a fascinating crossroads of professionalism and unguided experimentation. ***Ryan Reed***

Robb Kunkel

Abyss LIGHT IN THE ATTIC

Robb Kunkel was a wanderer. He moved from Indiana to California to Colorado to Chicago, and traveled around Mexico and Europe. He was a steady-gigging barroom piano player at vacation spots. For a time, Kunkel worked as a promotions guy for ABC-Dunhill records, which sort of led him to his connection with Tumbleweed Records, the label that released his sole album—this wide-ranging 1973 oddity that moved from mystic folk-rock shrouded in surf sounds and spectral harmony vocals with tinkling chimes to skittering gag-country and baroque piano ballads. Mystic visions of the universe pop up. "Don't the earth look so much different now/ that you've seen the sun from inside out?" sings Kunkel on the Jefferson Airplane-ish album opener "You Were the Morning." Kunkel's sound had something in common with the music that ELO, Boston and Todd Rundgren were making at about the same time—ambitious pop music with flashes of a Broadway/rock-opera aesthetic. Kunkel, who also wrote and published short stories drawn from his travels, died in 2015 at the age of 64. The wind and string section interludes add a level of Burt Bacharach grandiosity to these songs. Kunkel said that he knew at the time that there wasn't a commercially viable song on the record, but that it was fun to blow a bunch of record-company money on making an elaborate document with the help of high-dollar session musicians. The results remain intriguing. ***John Adamian***

Blind Willie McTell

The Rough Guide to Blind Willie McTell WORLD MUSIC NETWORK

As noted in the liner notes of this definitive single-disc compendium, Bob Dylan sang, in a 1983 recording, that "No one can sing the blues/ like Blind Willie McTell." Dylan placed the country bluesman in the present tense—he

The Allman Brothers Band

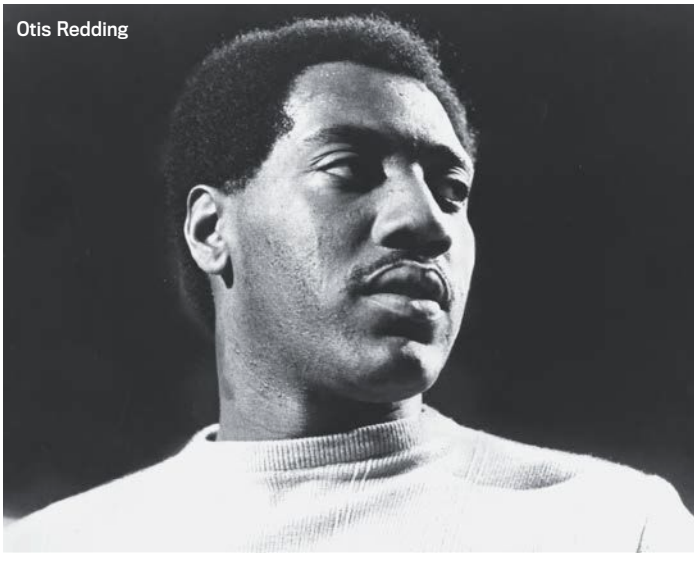
sings the blues, not *sang*—even though the subject of the story had been dead for more than two decades by that time. For Dylan, the inspiration still exists; the rest of us can use this refresher. Born in Georgia around the turn of the last century, McTell was a Piedmont-style fingerpicking guitarist who preferred 12 strings and loved his slide and, although he never received the level of recognition since bestowed on many of his contemporaries, his output is well worth a fresh look. The 25 tracks on the *Rough Guide* set date from the late-'20s through the mid-'30s and run the gamut from spirituals to the risqué, from good-time rags to the more solemn. The song most likely to be recognized by contemporary audiences is undoubtedly "Statesboro Blues," released in 1928 on the Victor label and later reborn as an epic Allman Brothers Band jam. McTell's voice is pitched in the upper register—he's most comfortable there—and his delivery is eerie, yet somehow still congenial, as he pushes the lyric forward in an insistent manner. Even with "Lay Some Flowers on My Grave," a 1935 cut, he manages to convey a sense of cheeriness, and after hearing the cheeky "Mama, Let Me Scoop for You," it's hard to imagine that any mama wouldn't have taken him up on the offer. ***Jeff Tamarkin***

Marillion

Brave: Deluxe Edition

PARLOPHONE/RHINO

Neo-progressive rock was always a strange term. If it's already "progressive," then isn't newness implied? On the other hand, if the entire point is to celebrate a preexisting style, then what's so new about it? More than just about any other band from this movement, **Marillion** epitomized this struggle early on—celebrating their influences (primarily Peter Gabriel-era Genesis) while searching for a unique niche within that context. The British quintet struck an ideal balance on 1985's *Misplaced Childhood*, a heady concept album blending symphonic-rock arrangements with New Wave pop hooks. But with frontman Fish's departure in 1988, the band was set adrift without a creative compass, attempting to regroup with new singer **Steve Hogarth**—whose warmer, more introspective voice pushed them toward a sleeker alternative-pop mode. By 1994's *Brave*, the new lineup had gelled. Instead of retracing the footprints of their heroes, Marillion finally brought a fresh perspective to their formative prog—weaving modern-rock angst and atmospheric interludes into the mix. **Steven Wilson**, king of the prog reissue (including Jethro Tull, Yes, Gentle Giant and King Crimson), brings depth and shimmer to his new remix, highlighting the headphone-worthy grandeur of **Dave Meegan**'s original production. But it's not like these songs needed tweaking: From **Steve Rothery**'s spastic guitar solos on "Living With the Big Lie" to **Mark Kelly**'s swirling synths on 12-minute behemoth "Goodbye to All That," *Brave* is a cohesive film for the ear. ***Ryan Reed***


Otis Redding

Phish

8/26/93, Arlene Schnitzer Concert Hall, Portland, Oregon LIVEPHISH

If you look at the recent LivePhish releases, then you can tell the band loves 1993, with five releases plucked from the month of August. The most recent offering comes from a Thursday night in Portland, Ore., **Phish**'s second to last show of their '93 summer tour, and a time when they were making the jump to small amphitheaters and large theaters. On paper, the show appears fairly standard—especially the first set. But just moments in, it's clear that ordinary is not in the cards. After a stuttery "Runaway Jim" opener, they immediately started playing around. During the pause in "Guelah Papyrus," **Trey Anastasio** introduced **Page McConnell** as Neil Young, who promptly started teasing "After the Gold Rush." The ending of "Fee" included a drawn-out, jazzy coda that hints at how the story-song would one day spiral into the ether. And a rare first set "Harry Hood" (toward the set's end) found the band tinkering with the intro in weird,

Dead Relics BY JESSE JARNOW

The Grateful Dead's most experimental album, *Anthem of the Sun*, was an uncompromising psychedelic clarion call when Warner Brothers released it in 1968. Following the band's comparably straight debut, *Anthem* was "mixed for the hallucinations," as author Jacqueline Edmonson, Ph.D, put it in *Jerry Garcia: A Biography*. A new 50th anniversary set presents the original release, a slightly subdued but revealing early 1970s remix supervised by **Phil Lesh**, a complete disc of the Dead at Winterland in October 1967 and incisive liner notes by journalist **Steve Silberman**. Though lore calls the Winterland show one of **Mickey Hart**'s earliest with the band, **Jeffrey Norman**'s cleaned-up mix doesn't show any sign of a second drummer on a rave-up "Turn on Your Love Light" or elsewhere—just the good ol' core quintet Dead powering through the earliest known "That's It for the Other One" (with original verses) and more.

Four years later, the heads came out of the hills and off the high desert communes to see the Grateful Dead in Albuquerque on Nov. 17, 1971—now *Dave's Picks Volume 26*. The Dead had never played New Mexico before, though once talked of moving there. The two discs from the first tour with new piano player **Keith Godchaux** have the Dead simultaneously working on material that would become *Europe '72* and gelling with the latest addition to the karass. The bliss comes on a 37-minute suite built around "The Other One," featuring a "Cryptical Envelopment" prelude, a drum solo, John Phillips' "Me and My Uncle," deep telepathy, a jam on Simon & Garfunkel's "Feelin' Groovy," and **Jerry Garcia** and Robert Hunter's "Wharf Rat," itself barely nine months old. The band encores with "Ramble on Rose"—a group so confident as to conclude its first night in town with a brand new song.

"Making a record is like building a ship in a bottle," Garcia once said. "Playing live music is like being in a rowboat on the stormy ocean." Rhino's new two-disc *The Best of the Grateful Dead Live* compilation, then, is like a nice day at the shore. The surf is way up on the "Truckin'"> "Morning Dew" from *Europe '72*, but the open seas are far away, with glimpses of magical tempests on the horizon ("Estimated Prophet" from *Cornell 5/8/77*). But it's mostly just a soundtrack for excellent sailing, by land or water, capturing an impressive variety of sun-dappled Grateful Deads, from the acid-noshing psychedelic pirates of the '60s (via the *Live/Dead* "St. Stephen") to the gentle picnic blanket strummers of 1980 (two songs from *Reckoning*). The two discs *almost* serve their task, give or take the absence of a "Dark Star" and some of *Infrared Roses*' drums/space segments, but who doesn't like the beach?

reggae-ish ways—taking extended time to get to the opening "Harry" shouts. Second set highlights include a spacey "2001"> "Davie Bowie" opener, an early "Lifeboy" (they had only played it eight times prior) and a rocking "Chalk Dust Torture." The show climaxed with a special guest, opener **Baby Gramps**, for a version of his tune "Nothin' But a Nothin." **Jon Fishman** accompanies his gruff offerings on vacuum—the high-pitch meets low-pitch moment of the night. Like other shows in the August '93 catalog, this show is playful Phish at their best, even after months on the road. There's a ton of energy and a handful of different sounds introduced into old favorites that give nearly every number an unexpected surprise. ***Mike Ayers***

The Allman Brothers Band

Peach Picks: Cream of the Crop 2003 PEACH

The Allman Brothers Band only recorded one studio album, 2003's *Hittin' the Note*, during their final lineup's 13-year run. That's a shame for many reasons, not least of which is that, as their new archival release *Cream of the Crop 2003* quickly demonstrates, the group came alive when they had some new material. The four-CD package includes 36 tracks recorded at six shows from July 25–Aug. 10, 2003. Avoiding any song repeats, the collection has the flow of a show, thanks to excellent selection and sequencing by supervising producer **Warren Haynes**. The set kicks off with the first three tracks on the band's 1969 debut, "Don't Want You No More"> "It's Not My Cross to Bear" and "Black Hearted Woman," then goes into its first *Hittin' the Note* selection, "Rockin' Horse." This opening sequence makes it immediately clear that on both their oldest and newest material, the entire group was firing on all cylinders in the summer of 2003. Haynes and **Derek Trucks**' guitars soar, spar and dance, split hard left and right; **Oteil Burbridge**'s bass and the three-man percussion section of **Butch Trucks**, **Jaimoe** and **Marc Quiñones** are locked and loaded; and **Gregg Allman**'s surging organ and vocals are on point. His singing has a muscular depth, and physicality that he never quite regained after his 2010 liver transplant. Guests **Karl Denson** ("Good Morning Little School Girl"), **Susan Tedeschi** ("Don't Think Twice, It's Alright") and **Branford Marsalis** ("Dreams," "Whipping Post") add variety and excitement but the strength here is just a hot, focused band playing a great catalog. The summer 2003 tour marked the debut of the Allman's Instant Live recordings and some fans have already grumbled that this material has been previously released.

Yet, the curation, packaging and improved sound quality makes this collection more than worthwhile. The sad part is the reminder of what the Allmans were capable of, even this deep into their career, on any given summer night. ***Alan Paul***

Otis Redding

Dock of the Bay Sessions RHINO

As seminal as it is to the soul canon, the album version of **Otis Redding**'s *The Dock of the Bay* that we know today was a rushed affair. Released in January 1968, the title track was the obvious centerpiece—an astonishingly contemplative and melancholy song made all the more poignant for being one of the last recordings Redding worked on, mere weeks before his death in a plane crash on Dec. 10, 1967. But the album that was built around "(Sittin' On) the Dock of the Bay" consisted of older singles and B-sides, in a sequence that shed little light on where Redding was heading creatively and stylistically.

Though more material has been revealed with each new posthumous compilation, there was never an earnest attempt to dig into the album that might have been. This is where Rhino's new *Sessions* set comes in. Assembled to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the titular single's brief reign atop the charts in March 1968, and featuring liner notes by British producer and journalist (and Saint Etienne band member) **Bob Stanley**, the album creates an aura that finds Redding in the middle of a creative breakthrough—with **Booker T. Jones**, **Steve Cropper** and their fellow **M.G.'s** on hand to whip up a muscular Memphis sound behind him—just as soul music was evolving from pop commodity to vehicle for social expression. Songs like "Hard to Handle," "Love Man" and "Pounds and Hundreds (LBS + 100S)," as locked as they are lyrically to the theme of love in all its permutations, operate on another level entirely when considering the cathartic, "let's get together" sense of rhythm-as-rallying-cry that Redding was so deft at harnessing. Even a spontaneous-sounding jam like the gospel-spiritual "Amen" hints at the love-conquers-all worldview that seemed to drive him. It's a stretch to assert anything more than that—and really, where Redding made great strides in 1967 was in his tight command of melody and mood in his songwriting—but in the vein of "Say It Loud"-era James Brown or *Stand!*-era Sly Stone, it's tantalizing to think of how he might have reacted to America's explosive socio-political transformation at the end of the '60s. *Sessions* goes further than any other Redding retrospective toward answering the question.
Bill Murphy

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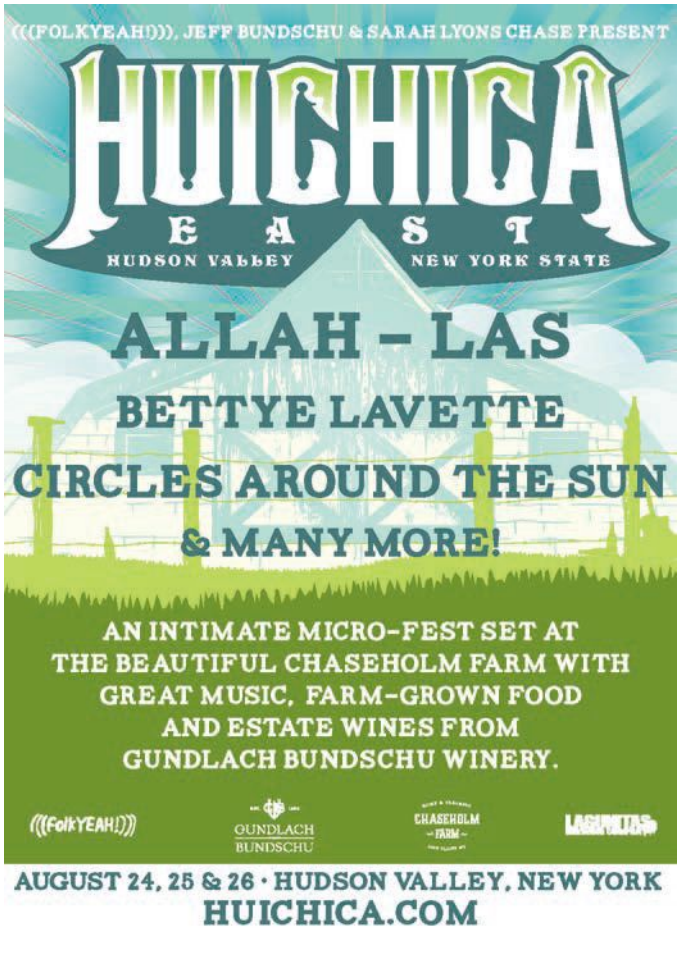

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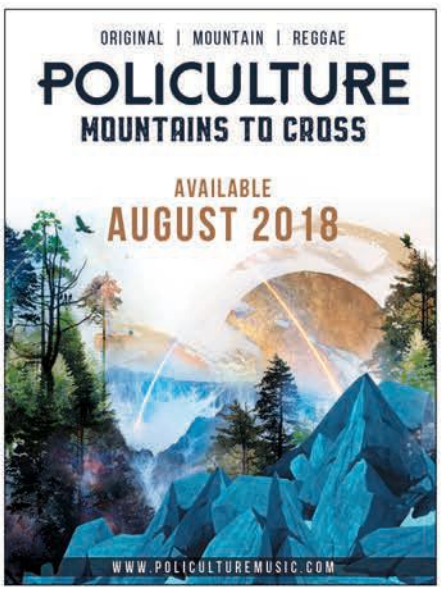
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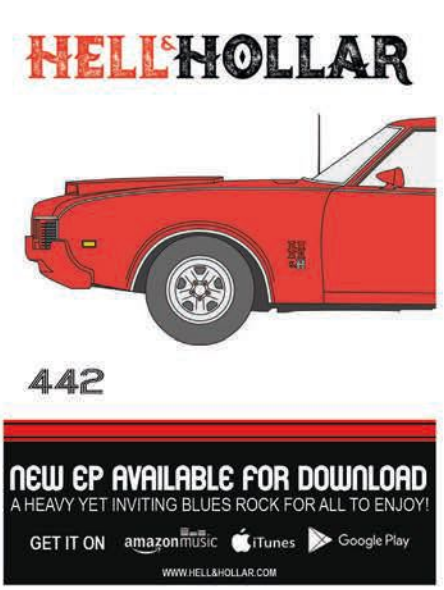
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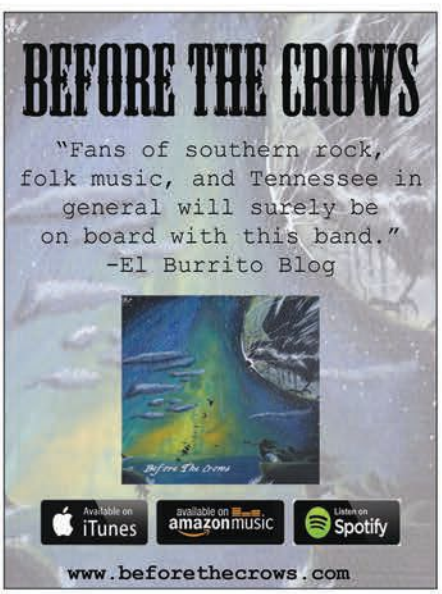
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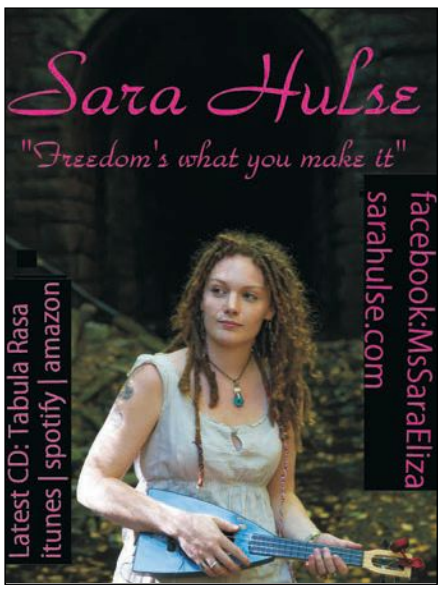

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encountered the ghost at the end of his bed. He woke up in horror and as soon as he was out of its thrall, he called up Rolling Thunder, a shaman to the Eastern Shoshone, who was living in a trailer house on an Indian reservation near Carlin, Nev. By then, Rolling Thunder had decided that he liked being the darling of rock stars, and so he was more than happy to talk to Bobby, even at such an ungodly hour of the night.

Weir said, "I've just experienced a ghost and it scares me. What should I do?" Rolling Thunder said, "You can exorcise this ghost. I would bet that if it's a ranch you are on, there are cedar fence posts somewhere nearby because they last a lot longer than regular fence posts." Rolling Thunder told Weir that he should get a drawknife and peel the fence posts, and then take all the bark peelings and put them in a coffee can. After he had punched holes in the side of the can and set the bark peelings on fire, he should go around the house with it and begin singing a Shoshone chant that Rolling Thunder started teaching him.

Now, it was true that there were cedar fence posts nearby, but they were all under about three feet of snow. So Bobby said, "No, no, no. Is there something I can do with less work?" And Rolling Thunder said, "You could take a box of stick matches and get a plate and burn the entire box and then grind them up until they are a fine carbon powder and then smear it all over your face." And Weir said, "That sounds doable."

So he went and got a box of stick matches from the kitchen and did just that. I only found out about what he had done when I went into his bedroom at six-thirty in the morning to wake him up so we could go feed the cattle together. Weir came up out of bed looking like Al Jolson about to break into "My Mammy."

It was one of those rare moments in my life when I was totally speechless. I had seen him earlier in the night when he was dealing with the dog, and he sure as shit hadn't looked like that.

We were feeding about 800 cows every morning and then writing songs in the afternoon and evening. We were still trying to figure out how to do this together. Bobby would sit there with a guitar and I would sit there with a legal pad.

We began with "Black-Throated Wind." Oddly enough, I had written the chorus while riding on a bus to the airport in Kathmandu and not anywhere near drowning in the Mother American night. If anything, I was drowning in the weird Nepali night. It was the first thing that ever showed up that seemed like it might be part of a song and not a poem.

I sang those lines for Weir, and he perversely put them into a different melodic setting than I'd just sung. I then wrote the rest of the lyrics. The last few verses were like a dental extraction. They have grown on me over the years, but at the time, it was all perspiration and no inspiration and wretchedly painful. I do think the line "You ain't gonna learn what you don't want to know" is actually pretty good.

Weir and I were drinking Wild Turkey one night, which we did all the time because I don't think Bobby and I ever wrote a song together when we were not drinking Wild Turkey, and up on the wall of the cabin, I had this old-timey N.C. Wyeth print of an Indian with his hands out. Weir looked at the print and said, "You know what he's saying, right?" I said, "No, what?" And he said, "Looks like rain."

I thought that was hilarious. Only Weir would say that. It was a total Weir-ism. And it led to "Looks Like Rain." He planted the seed, even though at that point my experience with "being in love" was pretty much restricted to Shakespeare, opera and novels by women with three names from the southern states in which someone would swoon. I had often thought about what actually being in that sort of love would be like and had concluded that it was a fiction humans had created to make us all feel more painfully aware of our limitations.

In a sense, the lyrics were fraudulent because I was not writing from experience. But I was writing from a kind of foreknowledge, and it all came to me relatively easily. I then did something that I had sworn, after "Mexicali Blues," I would never do again, which was just give the lyrics to Bobby without any sense of where they ought to go or what the song should sound like. But Bobby did an incredibly beautiful job of writing the melody, and I was delighted when I heard it.

Many years later, the Dead were playing "Looks Like Rain" in Nassau Coliseum, and I was snuggled up against a woman with whom I actually was in that kind of love. I suddenly realized who this song had been composed for and who it was that I felt this way about. I started singing it to her and said, "I swear I wrote this for you many years ago." r

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their connection to the European audience was really strong and immediate. I thought, "We should do some stuff together." We talked about playing either in Europe or in the States and, as it turns out, we're gonna be doing shows in America together, both with The Avett Brothers and Lukas Nelson.

"DARK SIDE OF THE MULE"

Most of our fans, and your readers, know that on Halloween and New Year's Eve we do these thematic shows where we play somebody else's music or a set of songs related to a special theme. And 10 years ago on Halloween, we did a second set of Pink Floyd songs at the Orpheum Theatre in Boston. I intended for it to be a onetime thing, but we recorded and released it as *Dark Side of the Mule* [in 2014]. We chose that name because it was a play on words, not to indicate that we were going to play *Dark Side of the Moon*, though a lot of the songs we played did come from that album. We did a "Dark Side of the Mule" set again five years later at Mountain Jam and now, 10 years later, we've had so much encouragement from our fans that we are going to do an actual tour—albeit a short one—bringing it to different parts of the country. It's gonna be a blast because it'll be the first time we've ever done "Dark Side of the Mule" as more than a one-off. We added a track or two for Mountain Jam, and we are going to add a few more songs this summer so that we can make our set a little bit different every night and vary it up as much as it makes sense to on the short tour. Every night, the show will start out with a healthy portion of Mule songs and then morph into "Dark Side of the Mule."

STANDOUT SPRING SIT-INS

Our history with [harmonica player and recent Mule guest] Hook Herrera goes all the way back to the beginning of Gov't Mule: He sat in and played harmonica with us during the first show we ever played—Los Angeles in 1994. He played on our first record, he played on our third record, and he and [drummer Matt Abts] went to Moscow together for a few weeks. So he's drifted in and out of our world over the years. We don't get to see him or play with him very often because he lives in Europe and, since he was going to be here [in the States] for a week or so this spring, we decided to pull him into the fold, which allowed us to play some blues, which is always fun. But I also wanted to shake it up and do some stuff that wasn't blues-oriented. We did a couple of Los Lobos tunes—"Tears of God" and "River of Fools"—and we did stuff like John Lennon's "Working Class Hero." So it's a nice opportunity to play a few covers and some of the original stuff that he helped us with, like "Bad Little Doggie" and "I Think You Know What I Mean." He recorded both of those songs with us, so it was fun to go back to the way that they originally sounded with his harmonica.

Don Was and I have become good friends over the past few years and we were both part of The Last Waltz 40 tour. We really enjoy playing together. He spends more time as a producer than he does as a player these days so it's always a lot of fun for him to jump onstage and kind of express himself that way. After doing a bunch of shows together, it made sense for Gov't Mule to pull him in to co-produce some of our new record. We really enjoyed working with him in the studio and look forward to doing that again.

A HEALTHY BREAK

We released *Revolution Come… Revolution Go* about a year ago, and the songs are starting to take on new shapes on the road. They sound different every night and are growing over time; it's fun to see where they wind up. One of the things I'm really looking forward to is playing some of the bonus material that was only available on the deluxe CD. There are three songs we haven't played yet from the deluxe CD, and there are two songs that we recorded which were just released on a vinyl single for Record Store Day. So I'm looking forward to working those into the live performances as well. We've gradually worked all the new material into the show, and those are the last ones to be added into the fold.

> "The Avetts and Gov't Mule each have one foot in the jamband world and one foot in another world, although we are coming from opposite sides." **WARREN HAYNES**

Haynes with The Avett Brothers at Asheville, N.C.'s Christmas Jam, 12/13/17

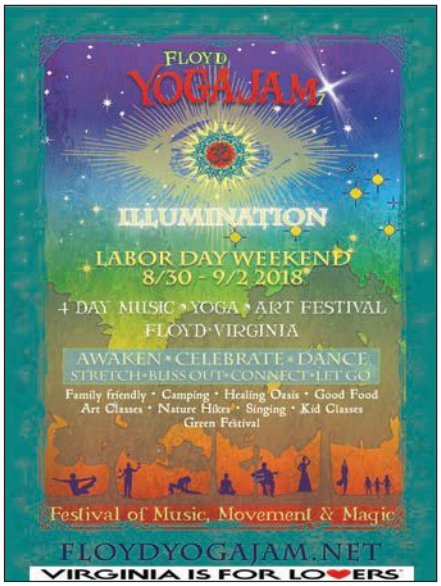
Taking some time apart after we did [2013's] *Shout!* was a really healthy thing for us. Everybody did different projects during the interim and, whenever we regroup after those breaks, things always have a way of coming together in a new, unique sort of fashion. Everybody was really happy to be playing together again and writing together again. Since we passed the 20-year mark [in 2014], we've started to look at the future as an open slate to just do whatever we feel like doing and spend a lot more time together—we did a lot more writing and rehearsing for this record than we have in quite some time. And a lot of great songs came out of that. We've spent weeks working on songs like "Thorns of Life" and "Revolution Come...Revolution Go," getting them to the point where they were ready to record. It helped us in that we had about 21 songs to choose from in the studio, and we wound up recording 15 or 16 of them. It's nice to have that luxury because making the best album is not always just picking the 10 or 12 best songs; it's picking the ones that work together the best and that create a flow and that are different enough from each other to maintain a listener's interest. So, sometimes, if there's a couple of songs that are similar to each other, one might make it on this record and one might make it on the next one.

OF BANDS AND BROTHERS

We're starting to think about the next [Mule] project. It's nice to have a project to write for: If there's an album on the horizon, then I've always got that project in the front of my mind when I'm envisioning my songs. That's the first step, and we will see where it's going. But I'm writing throughout the entire year to varying degrees, regardless of whether there's a project going on or not. So, if there isn't a pending project, then I'm just writing whatever comes to mind. And that's a good thing too, because I have a lot of different ways to express myself and outlets that I can pursue. Writing for a band like Gov't Mule or the Allman Brothers Band makes you think about the strengths of that band, specifically, that you're writing for.

[In terms of playing songs from the Allman Brothers catalog], I feel that keeping their music alive is very important. There are tons of bands who are helping keep that music alive—and it's gonna remain vital regardless because of the important role that it played in rock-music history and the history of the jamband scene. But, being connected to it the way that I am, it's an interesting challenge to see which ones we can interpret in our own way, while paying tribute to the legacy at the same time. It just seems appropriate. It's gonna be fun to play after Dickey [during Peach Fest]. I'm really looking forward to it and I'm glad he made the decision to start touring again. I'm looking forward to hearing that band and possibly doing some playing together.

Dino Perrucci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VIRGINIA IS FOR LOVERS

The Record Company showcasing their latest set of songs at SweetWater 420 Fest, 4/20/18.

from the work, stress and responsibilities to the money and songwriting evenly. All three band members would also get to vote on every band decision. "We will not green light something, in any respect, if we all three don't feel it," says Vos. "I like to say we're three reasonably capable guys that can make one good decision at a time collectively."

Thanks to some licensing checks, the members of The Record Company were able to stay afloat, and they eventually scored an opening slot for Brian Setzer Orchestra on a national tour. They hawked their two self-released EPs on the road, catching the eyes of the Concord Records reps scouting their show at Detroit's Fox Theatre.

"It was one of those nights when the merch line was like one for a roller coaster," says Cazorla. "You could see those [Concord] guys thinking, 'Whoa.'"

In February 2016, Concord released *Give It Back to You* and "Off the Ground" topped the Adult Alternative Songs chart thanks to regular plays on 93 XRT in Chicago, WXPN in Philly and SiriusXM. Their concerts—raw, muscular revels built around the punk-marrow bones of rock-and-roll—also started to sell out. Then, in December, they landed a Grammy nomination for Best Contemporary Blues Album.

"My wife's saying, 'Oh, my god. Oh, my god.' And, I'm thinking: 'It's 6 a.m.—this is nothing good,'" Vos reminisces. "We had all been beat through the mill," Stiff adds. "Who would have thought that three guys, who aren't 23 years old, playing this music in Los Angeles, would succeed?" (Fantastic Negrito's *The Last Days of Oakland* would take home the trophy, but this was more than a moral victory for The Record Company; see a Spotlight on him elsewhere in this issue.)

Then, The Record Company was faced with the difficult challenge of following up their unexpected success. A lot had changed during their five years together. There were expectations—they couldn't follow up their breakthrough LP with another living room record, nor did they want to, but their music needed to remain as pure as it had been before. It also needed to reveal growth and the climate around them.

"When we first started out, our songs were kind of about making people feel good at Harvard & Stone," says Stiff. "The world we're in today isn't necessarily 'feel so good.'"

The house remained an incubator; the three musicians met at noon every day for a series of joint writing sessions.

"When we pace our record, we think about a side A and a side B," says Vos. "I think this new album brought me to mental and physical collapse about 15 or 16 times."

If their debut mirrored the exuberance they felt finally being in a band that clicked, then their sophomore album, *All of This Life*, would be what's behind the glass. The struggles and doubt, the challenges and choices were all sources of stimuli.

"The best work you can do to make things brighter is to tend to light inside yourself," says Vos. "There's a lot of talk on this record about what has been beautiful, and there's talk about what needs to happen. It's an honest reflection of the fact that we'd gone through shit. If you aren't being as honest as the day you played that first song, when you write this new record, it's going to be fake. It's not going to be us."

The band booked time at Hollywood's Boulevard Studios and tapped Stiff to produce. They recorded template parts in the living room. Boulevard's stock of vintage analog gear was impressive, and exciting to utilize. Still, some house recordings just sounded better.

"The pressures that we talk about—of being Grammy nominated or whatever—go out the window when we're here. This is our happy focus place," says Stiff.

"And whether anybody listens or not is OK because we feel like we got to say what we wanted to say," adds Cazorla.

Ahead of *All of This Life*'s June release, the band issued the first single, "Life to Fix." Its companion video, filmed in stark black and white, splits the screen into equal thirds. The track opens with Stiff's rolling liquid bass riff, before Cazorla counters with commanding kick-drum thuds as Vos' brusque and determined voice enters. Then, he hits a wooly power-chord downstroke on guitar and the track blasts off. Within a few weeks, "Life to Fix" surged to No. 15 on Billboard's Triple A National Airplay. People were definitely listening.

"There were a lot of years of beating our heads against the wall. But, here we are together. We get to do this," says Vos. "I'd do it all the same."

Dean Budnick

melody and the lyrics. I feel that writing—when it's done well—is like engaging in a process that's akin to dreaming when you're awake because you're accessing the subconscious. That's how I engaged in this writing with Peter since I could easily bypass my mind. He's such a melodic player that his guitar playing suggests this melodic content. So it was just letting go, opening up, singing and being open to the first thing you want to sing—committing to that and letting go.

FOREVER WAITING

ARTHUR: There were three phases to the initial process of getting this record made. The first one was in Mexico, the second one was in LA and then the third one was in Portland. By the time Peter was leaving LA, we decided to meet up in a few days in Portland, and write a couple more songs, and go into the studio there and record Peter's rhythm guitar. So then, I could take it home to Brooklyn and work on it. "Forever Waiting" is one of those first five songs from Mexico. We were writing songs that would just be fun to sing and that one voice could carry. Then, we went out and played this little festival during the day in front of about 20-30 people, and we played in a little bar, on another day, in front of about 10-20 people.

IF YOU WAKE UP IN TIME

ARTHUR: That's one of the ones that, when Tchad was mixing, he was like, "Man, I really like the way this one is going, but I don't know if you guys are gonna like it." It's a good example of what Tchad brings. He makes arrangements out of the instruments and excludes things and includes things so I feel like, in some ways, he invented the way that this song sounds.

He's a producer and mixer, but he puts a pretty strong stamp on things. He arranges things and just has a very bold approach, a strong signature. I always feel real confident when he's mixing something. He takes chances and he does things that aren't expected or safe yet, everything sounds really good. So it gives you confidence.

SUMMERTIME

BUCK: At one point, before we had "American Century," it was nine songs and I felt that we needed to add something. About 10-12 years ago, I decided I was going to teach myself how to play piano. I played for like three hours a day and I scored a play by recording piano stuff. Then, through life changes, I moved out of that house, and I don't think I've touched a keyboard again. But I did happen to have mp3s of this music floating around. It was about 15 minutes of piano-based stuff. I sent it to Joe as an mp3 and said, "Your assignment is to write lyrics and sing this tonight and send it back to me tomorrow." What he came up with was great and Tchad apparently liked it because he stretched it out a little bit.

AMERICAN CENTURY

BUCK: "American Century" was written at Christmastime and recorded sitting by the pool at 10 at night. Joe programmed the drums and I put down some electric guitars in the backyard. That one is probably the most-produced track and I don't know if it's because of the way we recorded it or that it was worked on later—or maybe it's the one that Tchad really felt the strongest about.

Tchad mixed the record, and he's a great mixer. Some of the stuff he does goes a little past mixing kind of into production. And certainly with "American Century"—the dropouts, the extended bits, the endings—all those were things that he sculpted out of the original track.

"American Century" is an essay from 1941 explaining why America has the moral, financial and military might to shape the world in its form. I read it in high school and it sounded like bullshit to me. And then, in the last 15 years, there was an essay called, "Farewell, the American Century" by a different person that pretty much described how we reneged on the potential that we had, and you can't help but look around and see that.

I had the riffs and chords and I wrote a bunch of words. The chorus was "Farewell American Century" but my verses were directly political and less interesting. Joe took the basic idea and switched it around to make it have more of a spiritual feel—that a lot of what's very wrong in America isn't all coming from the top, that there are things in the middle of the country that are rotten too. But I don't think he wanted to it to be a real negative statement. Joe wanted to make a forward-thinking record, maybe sharing some of the positive vibes that he's going through.

FOREVER FALLING

BUCK: "Forever Falling" was the first song we finished. Originally, I'd been playing on some of Joe's things for his solo album. He had set up his little recording thing and I was just coming up with riffs. Then I started strumming without really thinking and Joe goes, "Ooh, what's that?" I told him that I didn't know. I was sort of playing and strumming. At the moment, the music and the lyrics fell together really quickly. We had a demo done in like 10-15 minutes.

After we did two shows in Mexico and one in Los Angeles, Joe said to me: "You know, I was going somewhere else with my solo record but this feels like a real record all the way through, and it should be treated as such." So, I booked a day in the studio in Portland and he came to visit. We worked with a lot of programmed drum stuff originally, and then I put down all my guitars—a lot of acoustic and some electric stuff, thinking, "Maybe this is a demo" and then he took it home.

BEFORE YOUR LOVE IS GONE

BUCK: "Before Your Love Is Gone" doesn't feel like the rest of the record to me, and I don't know why. I think it's partly the tempo and the measured-ness of it. It's not particularly funky. It's not super dynamic. It just kind of had a sad feeling when we were working on it.

WIDE AWAKE IN NOVEMBER

ARTHUR: "Wide Awake in November" was one of the ones we wrote in Portland, so it was one of the last two. On the initial demo, I had it as track two. It was my favorite song on the record. Then, when Tchad was mixing it, he was like, "Hey, there's no bass in 'Wide Awake in November.' Did you mean that?" And I had no idea. I thought, "I don't know. I kind of like it like that. 'When Doves Cry' doesn't have any bass." And he was like, "No, man, put a bass on it." And so I was like, "Fuck, OK." So I put a bass on it and sent it to him, and I still really liked the way it sounded without bass, but then he sent it back and it was leaning heavy on the bass, so I got used to it like that. It's one of my favorites and it's one of my friend's favorites, and he was mad at me for putting it on track 10, all the way in the back of the record. But the record's strong throughout, so hopefully people get to it.

CAN'T MAKE IT WITHOUT YOU

ARTHUR: That was the magical moment for me in the studio in Portland because Peter was doing all that feedback E-Bow stuff that reminds me of "E-Bow the Letter" from *New Adventures in Hi-Fi*. That's one of my favorite R.E.M. songs, so when I heard him do that in the studio, it brought me back to that. It's wild when somebody's feedback has a signature because feedback is feedback.

It's really difficult to articulate magical moments in music without reducing them. But that was definitely one of them: when I realized his feedback had a signature. I was just like, "Wow." I feel like this project has a *thing* where two people came together and made something that has this chemistry, an element that these two energies are bringing to it.

RAY LAMONTAGNE

By DEAN BUDNICK

"I HAVE TO MAKE myself available when I hear the melodies or feel the current that pulls me toward the guitar," Ray LaMontagne explains while considering the series of events that led him to record his new album, *Part of the Light*. "Otherwise, those things just disappear; they just go away."

In this case, the process began a few months after concluding his tour in support of *Ouroboros*, the expansive and enveloping album that LaMontagne recorded with producer Jim James and then performed on the road with the other members of My Morning Jacket.

"There was a theme with all the songs that I was feeling," LaMontagne continues. "Just an overall sense of trying to affirm what's real and what's important to me at this time in our culture—human culture, really—where people are just so isolated. All this technology that is supposed to bring everybody together and make a human connection does the opposite—it leads people to feel isolated and alone. It seems like such a sad time in human history—not to be a downer, but it does. There's such a disconnect from the gift that we all have just being alive on this planet. It's such a beautiful existence. We get this little blip of time to enjoy and be part of it, and we're so separated from it.

"As the songs were being written, it just became clearer to me that, in my subconscious, I was trying to soothe myself and say, 'Look, your friendships, those moments you have with your friends and the people that you love, all these things are so precious; this is what it's all about. And just try to remember that every day; remind yourself what a gift it is just to be here.'"

To read LaMontagne's thoughts on each individual song from the new record, check out our special online Track by Track feature at relix.com/partofthelight.

Given your thoughts on technology, have you ever considered limiting your audience members' access to their phones during shows, like Jack White is doing with the Yondr pouches on his current tour?

It would clutter my mind to worry about that. They bought a ticket, they're there; it's their night. They can do whatever they want. If they want to sit there and talk all night, fine. If they want to get into a fight with the guy next to them, fine.

I'm gonna play the tunes and, if they want to listen and actively engage in it and experience it, then they will. And if they don't, then there's nothing I can do about it. If I worried about that, then I would be pissed off every night that I was on tour. Can you imagine how that would feel? What a distraction to worry about people being on their phones.

Has it been that way throughout your career or is this something that you've learned over time?

No, that's something I think I've learned: to let go of those things. Anything that's out of my control, I just don't even think about it anymore. If it's a chatty audience, I just don't care. It's not up to me how people behave. I show up, I bring it and if they want to give back, then it becomes a great night where that circle really happens. I always do my part and that's not to pat myself on the back. It's just my approach. How the night proceeds is really up to the energy of the audience.

On your last tour, I noticed the audience energy varied a bit during portions of the show, depending on when they first engaged with your music. Some people were particularly enthusiastic about the *Ouroboros* material, while others were notably effusive for your earlier work.

Supernova was the same. We put *Supernova* out and the first line of the first review I read was: "I cannot tell you how much I hate this record." And again, *Supernova*, for me, was a massive breakthrough because I had come off of about two years of not playing music at all and reassessing a lot of things in my life. But mostly what was driving me at the time was that I was just turning 40 and something wasn't working any more. I finally realized that the negative self-critical voice that had been driving me hard just wasn't working anymore, and it was just hurting me. It wasn't serving me; it wasn't serving anything. It had its time when I was younger—it pushed me—but then, it just started to eat me a little bit. I didn't know what was happening, but I couldn't come back to music until I figured it out. But once I did, and I slowly started coming back to writing, it was from a different place and it was no longer this questioning of every song, every line. I had been so hard on myself, and all of that just fell away and I started to write from a different place—a place where I know what I can do. At this point, I really understand and feel confident in my own voice—my writing voice, I mean. There's no push and pull anymore. I just write the songs and let them be what they want to be. I loved that batch of songs—the *Supernova* batch of songs—and I still do.

Given all of that, moving forward, how do you view your relationship with yourself, your catalog and your audience?

I view my albums like paintings. I paint one and then I set it up against the wall and walk away from it, and then another painting comes to me and I work on that. It would be self-destructive to concern myself with how people are going to react, so I really don't think about it. I just put it out there and, if the album finds its way into people's lives, then that's great; but if it doesn't, I have no control over that.

When I hear that an album like *Ouroboros* has grown on someone, I appreciate that, because it's not going to mean something to everybody. But wherever the songs come from feels like a real gift, and I'm fortunate to even get the songs.

LOCKN'

AUGUST 23-26, 2018

THU, AUG 23

UMPHREY'S McGEE
9:45PM

LETTUCE
8:45PM

UMPHREY'S McGEE
7:30PM

LETTUCE
6:30PM

BUTCHER BROWN
6:00PM

ERIN & THE WILDFIRE
5:30PM

FIRECRACKER JAM
4:30PM

JERRY DANCE PARTY
3:30PM

RELIX STAGE

JOE RUSSO'S ALMOST DEAD
11:00PM

FRI, AUG 24

WIDESPREAD PANIC
10:00PM

GEORGE CLINTON & P-FUNK
8:45PM

UMPHREY'S McGEE
W/SPECIAL GUEST JASON BONHAM
7:15PM

TOOTS & THE MAYTALS
6:00PM

MOON TAXI
5:00PM

TURKUAZ
4:00PM

LUKAS NELSON
& PROMISE OF THE REAL
3:00PM

BAND OF CHANGES
2:15PM

GHOST LIGHT
1:30PM

CAITLYN SMITH
12:45PM

THE FUZZ BAND
12:15PM

RELIX STAGE

JOE RUSSO'S ALMOST DEAD
MIDNIGHT

SAT, AUG 25

DEAD & COMPANY
2 SETS • 9:15PM

TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND
7:15PM

KELLER & THE KEELS
6:15PM

PIGEONS PLAYING PING PONG
5:15PM

FOUNDATION OF FUNK
4:15PM

BIG SOMETHING
3:15PM

AGENTS OF GOOD ROOTS
2:30PM

THE SUFFERS
1:45PM

SOUTHERN AVENUE
1:15PM

PEOPLE'S BLUES OF RICHMOND
12:45PM

DISCO RISQUE
12:15PM

RELIX STAGE

LETTUCE
CELEBRATES JGB
MIDNIGHT

SUN, AUG 26

DEAD & COMPANY
W/SPECIAL GUEST BRANFORD MARSALIS
2 SETS • 8:45PM

TEDESCHI TRUCKS BAND
6:45PM

SHERYL CROW
5:30PM

BLUES TRAVELER
4:15PM

MATISYAHU
3:15PM

SPAFFORD
2:15PM

THE JUDY CHOPS
1:45PM

KELLER WILLIAMS' GRATEFUL GOSPEL
12:15PM

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